

Traditions of Buddhist practice in Burma

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Abstract

The thesis explores traditions of Buddhist practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*) in Theravada Buddhist Burma, with major emphasis on the practice of *wi'pat-tha-na* (Pali *vipassanā*) meditation as understood both inside and outside the context of the meditation centre.

Burmese meditation centres are a recent development. The meditation centre founded by a pupil of the Min-gun Hsa-ya-daw in 1911 in Myo' Hla' is probably the earliest. Since then some one thousand Burmese meditation centres have been established both nationally and internationally, which have altogether taken in several million meditators. *Wi'pat-tha-na* meditation has thereby grown into an important national and international service industry, leaving few Burmese settlements without easy access to at least one meditation centre.

Unlike the conventional Burmese Buddhist monastery, which serves as a place of residence and a school of learning for ordained members of the monastic order, the meditation centre is open to both monks and unordained laity for short (between a week and three months) but intensive courses in meditation using methods which focus mainly on the body rather than abstract philosophical Buddhist ideas.

This thesis is divided into three parts: Part I looks at the history of meditation practice, Part II at the institutional aspects, and Part III at the lives of some of the persons associated with the tradition of practice. The subject is analysed in terms of five oppositions as distilled from the discourse of the meditators, namely: 'Buddhism' vs 'Buddhendom'; 'practice' vs 'scriptural learning'; 'meditation' vs 'charity'/'morality'; and 'insight' vs 'concentration' meditation.

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ဝိပဿနာ၏-ဤလောကသဘင်အဖွင့်ကြီးသည်-ပုပ်နာမ်ရှိခိုက်ကြည့်စဉ်မှာ-ပုပ်နာမ်မရှိဘဲပုပ်အဖြစ်ဟော့ ဘာပဟုပ်တဲ့အစိုးရကိုသာမှတ်မထားဘဲ ဒါကဝိပဿနာ-ကြည့်လိုက်ကြပါအဖို့-ရုက္ခိသာ သိမှတ်စရာ ဝိပဿနာ။

Photo 1. A dramatic representation of the intuitive knowledge of true practice. The caption to the painting says: 'As for wi' pat-tha-na: while alive, this world is good to look at, but when there is no life, there are only skeletons; that is wi' pat-tha-na. Wi' pat-tha-na is looking at it and knowing the skeletons.'

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2 Dr. Hkin Nyo (KN) learnt much while taking care as a medical doctor of very learned monks at Ma-ha-gan"da-yon in Amarapura for three years. He emphasises that his assistance to me was provided to the best of his *current* knowledge.

A note on Burmese transcription

Rendering Burmese language into the roman alphabet poses problems because there is no single agreed romanisation standard for it. Some authors adopt several different romanisation systems depending on their purpose; others—particularly early authors who did not have the benefit of modern linguistic research—did not adopt a strict system at all. The result is chaotic, aptly conveyed by Okell's example of the romanised word 'ba-tha', which can represent any one of 12 different pronunciations, each of which could be spelt in Burmese in several different ways: one pronunciation alone has at least 72 different spelling possibilities (Okell 1971:1).

Okell's authoritative *Guide to the Romanization of Burmese* (1971)—though not resolving all romanisation problems—certainly makes the problems more manageable. There are two methodological approaches to romanisation: transliteration 'aims to represent each letter and symbol of the Burmese script by a corresponding symbol in roman script irrespective of pronunciation', whereas transcription represents 'the sounds of Burmese speech' irrespective of its Burmese spelling. Transliteration is best avoided where possible because it results in text which is difficult to read, but it may be applied where unambiguous identification of the written Burmese is crucial. This thesis adopts what Okell recommends as the more legible transcription method for works, whose 'casual users,...includes anthropologists, political scientists, economists, geographers, librarians, journalists and traders...' (Okell 1971:56).

This thesis uses a particular type of transcription system—namely the 'standard conventional transcription system with raised comma tones'. An important advantage of this type³ is that it uses standard keyboard characters, which avoids having to draw in awkward symbols by hand. To minimise ambiguity, I have additionally included a glossary at the end of the thesis of all the transcribed Burmese terms together with their Burmese script

3 John Okell describes two other romanisation systems based on transcription, namely: phonetic transcription with voicing marked, and conventional transcription with accented tones.

equivalents and their approximate English meanings. In so far as possible, the transcription is based on the pronunciation indicated in the Government's Burmese dictionary (MAA 1980).

Quotes from sources using different romanisation systems have, wherever possible, been suffixed in square brackets at first occurrence with our transcription system. The transcription has not been applied to words already widely known by a different romanisation system (e.g. not Yan-gon, but Rangoon). I differ from Okell's recommendation only by setting transcribed Burmese in italics (he recommended roman), with the exception of Burmese personal and place names.

A note on Pali loanwords

The conventional transcription type romanisation of Burmese adopted in this thesis has, with the glossary at the back, the advantages both of legibility and accuracy; but there is still one important romanisation problem outstanding which has not been sufficiently contemplated in western literature on Buddhism.⁴

The question is: when I refer to Pali loanwords—i.e. Pali terms used by Burmese speakers embedded in the vernacular—do I treat these as *Burmese* words and use our conventional transcription system, or do I treat them as *Pali* words and use the better known Pali romanisation system?

The Buddha's teachings were transmitted by word of mouth for some 500 years before they were written down approximately 2,000 years ago. Pali is one of the two main languages in which these teachings were eventually recorded, the other being Sanskrit; the first is the language of the Southern school, the second of the Northern School. There is no known proprietary script for Pali—it exists but in the scripts of those who transliterated Pali such as Sanskrit, Sinhalese, Burmese, Thai, Cambodian, etc. Also, there is much variation in pronunciation of Pali in different Buddhist societies. Monks from one linguistic community are known to have difficulties communicating in Pali with monks from another linguistic community, as became clear when the Ma-ha-si met the Cambodian head of the monastic order, who could not understand what ^{the} an eminent Burmese monk said 'because of the difference in their twang'. The sequel to this is that in the end the Ma-ha-si, 'having come across a good number of foreign priests...in Rangoon' and 'having had experience in Pali phonetics rendered by the foreign Yogis', 'understood what they said and also could make them understand by talking to them in their own vocal sound' (Silananda 1982:101-2). Burmese Pali therefore had to be rendered into 'international' Pali in order to achieve successful communication.

4 This issue is further briefly referred to as the 'Pali trap' in the conclusion to chapter 2 and in the concluding chapter to this thesis (chapter 8).

The widely accepted romanisation system for the Sinhalese language, which also has many Pali loanwords, conveniently coincides with that of Pali and Sanskrit, so that the dilemma as to how to transcribe Pali loanwords does not arise in this vernacular (e.g. see Gombrich (1971) and Carrithers (1983)). But Pali loanwords in Burmese and Thai do pose a problem because the rules for romanising these languages are markedly different from the rules of the Pali romanisation system. If students of Burmese and Thai Buddhism have hitherto set the vernacular romanisation system aside with respect to Pali loanwords in the language—e.g. Bunnag (1973), Tambiah (1970, 1984), and Spiro (1970) have all used the Pali romanisation system for Pali loanwords in Thai and Burmese—, why should I break tradition by applying *Burmese* romanisation system to Pali loanwords?

The Burmese associate Pali with their origination as a people, and this ancient language is invasively present in their vernacular in syntax and lexicography. Pali loanwords are not *always* used in the same way as their scriptural and early commentarial equivalents. Pali 'suitable' (sappāya) has come to mean in Burmese 'to wash a Buddha image or a monk with water' or simply 'to inspire to worship' (*that-pe thi*). Burmanisation of Pali loanwords takes place in its adaptation to meet new contexts: for example, 'factory' is *sek-yon* from the Pali word 'wheel' (sekka) plus Burmese 'booth'; the Pali term 'merit' (puñña), combined with Burmese 'big' (*gyi*) has come to mean 'monk'; the Pali word for 'inherent nature' (dhātu) plus the Burmese word for 'light' (*mi*) has come to mean 'electricity' (*dat-mi*). Also, *bo* (P. bala meaning 'strength, power, force; an army..') during the colonial period eventually came to signify simply 'Englishman' (Hla Pe 1960:91), and from there, 'hair of *bo*' (*bo-kei*) came to mean the modern European cropped

hair-style. It is not always easy to pinpoint where such 'popular' Burmese meaning would differ from what is attributed to the Pali word within the western scholarly Indological tradition, but the point is that we cannot afford to assume that the two are equivalent.⁵

Use of the Burmese transcription system, therefore, serves as a reminder that there is a unique contemporary linguistic context for each Pali loanword. But such Burmese transcription method is hardly a perfect solution. First, romanised Pali has the advantage of being more comprehensible to the majority of readers. Second, some Buddhists have expressed disapproval because it appears to violate the prevailing ideal of Pali (and the scriptures themselves) remaining immutable through time; the adoption of an unfamiliar romanisation system is sometimes taken to imply that Burmese Buddhism is unorthodox.

All I can reply is that the Buddha is thought to have given permission for his followers to recite his teachings in their 'own language' (*sakāya niruttiyā*).⁶ The Buddha is also thought to have used Pali because he sought to avoid Sanskrit (which was the language of the Brahmins), in favour of the dialects or languages of the area in which he found himself. This should legitimise our recognition of 'vernacular' Pali—a Burmese Pali which is different in writing, pronunciation, and meaning, and which contributes its own unique dimension to our overall knowledge of Buddhism.

I have inserted into the glossary at the back the romanised Pali alongside the Burmese word wherever possible. To avoid confusion, I have underlined words in standard romanised Pali but italicised those transcribed using the Okell conventional transcription method.

5 This tendency to equate concepts in one language with those in a more ancient language is, of course, not unique to the Burmese-Pali relationship. It has been popularly applied to the study of the Pali language itself too. Stede expressed dissatisfaction with the prevalent tendency among scholars to derive the ultimate meaning of Pali words from Sanskrit: 'we cannot always equate Pali:Classical Sanskrit. It is a wrong method to give the Sanskrit form of a Pali word as its ultimate reduction and explanation. Sometimes Pali formation and meaning are very different from the Sanskrit. Popular language and 'Volksetymologie' are concerned here.' (Rhys Davids 1921-25:737). For some further thoughts on this issue see end-notes, 'Pali-Burmese'.

6 See Norman 1985.

နမော တဿ ဘဂဝတော အရဟတော သပ္ပာသပ္ပုဋ္ဌဿ။

na-maw"ta'tha ba-ga-wa'taw" a-ra'ha'taw" tha-ma-than-bok-da'tha
(P. *namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*)

'Praise to that one who is blessed, worthy, fully and completely enlightened'¹

¹ An abbreviation of the Pali sentence placed at the beginning of each book in the Buddhist scriptures, but also found in contemporary Burmese and Pali works communicating on religious matters.

Introduction

Up to the beginning of the Kon"baung Period [1752-1885] 'practice' (*pa-di'bat*) was merely in existence, and was like a few puddles of water here and there, but it did not have any strength to flow. During the later part of the Kon"baung Period, there were the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw [1798-1890] and (Hpon"daw-gyi" U") Thi-la' [1832-1907]. During this period the water began to flow little by little into a creek, but due to its small size it did not have the force to cut its way through the dense and high forests and mountains. Then there were the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw [1846-1923], Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw [1871-1931] and the Mo"hnyin" Hsa-ya-daw [1872-1964]. In their time 'practice' began to flow and gather strength, and it changed from a little creek into a big river. The strength and the sounds of the flowing water went on to be felt by the whole country... After independence in 1948, the flow became as strong as rivers like the Irrawaddi, and with *hsa-ya-daws* taking responsibility for 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*)—Tha-hton Zei-da-wun Hsa-ya-daw [1870-1955], Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw [1877-1952], Kan-ni Hsa-ya-daw [1879-1966], Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw [1895-1977], Mo"gok Hsa-ya-daw [1899-1962], Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw [1904-1982]—the dignity of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) was advanced' (Htei" Hlaing 1981a:12) [dates changed to Western calendar: some dates added for clarity.]

Burmese Buddhist practice

This thesis is about Buddhism, but not just any type; it is about Burmese Buddhist practice. The Buddha is alleged to have said that 'all worldlings are insane' because they live in ignorance of the true nature of themselves, and because they accept and live according to how things appear to be rather than how they truly are. They 'have wrong views that what is impermanent[,] suffering, void of self-existence and unpleasant is permanent, happy, self-existent and pleasant.' He suggested that the way out from this insanity meant serious Buddhist practice, in particular of *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation.²

The significance of Buddhist practice, known in Burmese as *pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na* (P. *patipatti sāsana*), is described in some detail in chapter 3, but it represents one of a threefold distinction within the term 'Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na*). 'Buddhism' represents:

- i) a set of instructions (to do scriptural learning, *pa-ri'yat-ti*)
- ii) to be implemented in practice (to practise, *pa-di'pat-ti*) in order to
- iii) attain a state where the causes of insanity are entirely eliminated (to achieve the state of penetration, *pa-di'wei-da*).

Some types of Buddhist practice, such as morality (*thi-la*) and charity (*da-na*), help to guide the actions of humanity towards a selfless and ethical purpose. Others, such as concentration meditation (*tha-ma-ha*), help to control thoughts before any actions might arise. But though these are precursors

2 See U Thittila Hsa-ya-daw's preface to *Than Daing* (1970:2).

to attaining what the Buddha considered a 'sane' state, neither 'charity', 'morality' or 'concentration' can eliminate the root cause of ignorance; this can only be eliminated by the development of ^{'wisdom'} and 'insight' achieved through *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation.

WM has increased enormously. Since the foundation of the first known meditation centre by the Min³gun⁴ Hsa-ya-daw in 1914, today there are at least two dozen distinct nationally renowned WM methods which operate many hundreds of centres,³ many thousands of teachers,⁴ and hundreds of thousands of practitioners. This means that we are not studying tradition in the singular but *traditions* in the plural.

This proliferation of traditions must be understood in relation to the lack of overarching church in Burmese Buddhism: there is no single ritual that binds together laity and monk in a single community, and teachers and pupils operate for the most part independently. Furthermore, ^{during the colonial period} in the absence of strong indigenous government seeking to 'govern' the monastic order through the appointment of a head of the monastic order (*tha-tha-na baing*), the monastic order has itself been subject to schisms and sects, which contributed to a differential interpretation of the methodologies of WM.

Because achievements in *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation are dependent to a significant degree on the other forms of Buddhist practice, and since 'Buddhist practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) is the way many WM exponents conceive of their traditions both historically and in terms of contemporary practice, this thesis will examine Buddhist practice as a whole, rather than *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation alone. *Wi'pat-tha-na* meditation (abbrev. as WM) has come to be emphasised by Burmese Buddhists as the *summum bonum* of Buddhist practice.

GH I have spent ten years in pursuit of the subject of this thesis. But increasingly I have found that I can not do justice to the mass of ethnographic detail available, which appears to be increasing exponentially with time. There are now many more biographies of meditation teachers than when I began, and the literature on Buddhist practice has swollen beyond belief. At some point a line has to be drawn, and it has to be accepted simply that not all relevant details about Burmese Buddhist practice can be accommodated in a thesis such as this.

Nevertheless, it has also become increasingly clear to me that, however colourful and varied Buddhist practice in Burma may be, in the end ^{the} ~~the colourful descriptions of~~ subjective individual experience are expressed in terms of a common discourse. My aim has been not to describe and analyse WM or Buddhist practice itself, but to understand the way people talk about it; the

3 The various Burmese concepts for 'meditation centre' will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5 on the meditation centre.

4 See end-notes, *ka-ma-han-na' sa-ri'ya'*.

* *wi'pat-tha-na* abbreviated.

way they 'essentialise' it in terms of a common discourse. Here, in spite of the confusing plurality of traditions and experiences, at another level WM may be conceived as a single objective tradition.

To delineate this thesis more specifically, then, I seek to understand the way many hundreds of thousands of contemporary Burmese Buddhist *wi'pat-tha-na* meditators are apt to distil oppositions within and without Buddhism to a number of core Pali Theravada Buddhist loanwords in Burmese which, though clearly interrelated and interdependent, are also opposed (see Fig. 1, in which the roman numerals refer to the oppositions described below):

- (i) The WM *yaw"gi* actively discriminates between different types of knowledge; between perception based knowledge created by man (*thin-nya*), and true sacred intuitive wisdom based on the knowledge of cause and effect as they truly are (*pyin-nya*) and as intended by the Buddha. The first is associated with 'nomenclature' (*pyin-nyat*), 'conventional truth' (*tha-mok-ti' thit-sa*), and 'worldly knowledge' (*law"ki pyin-nya*); the second is associated with 'ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-hta' thit-sa*) and 'otherworldly knowledge' (*law"kot-ta-ra pyin-nya*). This knowledge distinction may be summed up in terms of the discrimination some practice-exponents have made between 'mistaken Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) as parentally received religious practice mixed up with customary, inherited or second-hand knowledge including ideas about astrology, spirit worship, science, vocational knowledge, and various foreign religions vs. 'true Buddhism' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*) as reconstructed from a limited set of ancient scriptures and as experienced in meditation. Chapter 2 deals specifically with this opposition.

The above Pali loanwords in Burmese encapsulate the argument for WM, and for Buddhist practice as a whole, in relation to what is *external* to Buddhism (i.e. in relation to the foreigner and non-Buddhist). But below follow four more oppositions that are particularly important to the understanding of WM in relation to the world *internal* to Buddhism (See Fig. 1):

- (ii) The *yaw"gi* emphasises 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) and its fruit 'penetration' (*pa-di'wei-da*), over 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*). Chapter 3 specifically deals with this opposition.
- (iii) Unordained *yaw"gi* may claim membership of the community of monks as 'monk of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-hta' than-ga*), i.e. by virtue of meditational activity and Buddhist practice, instead of 'monk of conventional truth' (*tha-mok-ti' than-ga*), i.e. membership by conventional ordination within the historical monastic lineage and scriptural learning. Chapters 3 and 5 deal with this issue.
- (iv) The WM *yaw"gi* emphasises 'meditation' (*ba-wa-na*) over other forms of conventional Buddhist action, such as 'charity' (*da-na*) and 'morality' (*thi-la*). The latter are not unique

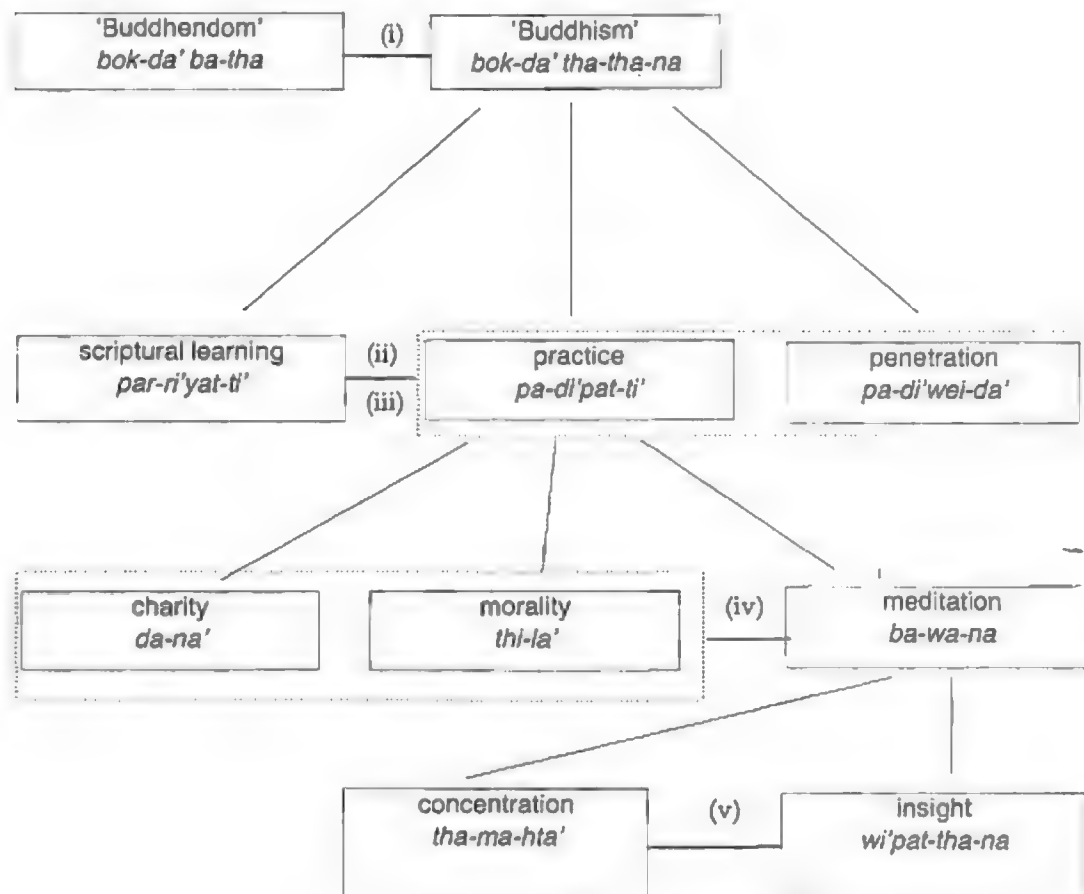


Fig. 1. The order of Buddhist practice: oppositions (i)-(v) are drawn upon by exponents of the WM movement depending on context.

to Buddhism. Most chapters refer to this issue in some way or another (e.g. chapter 4 on the discrimination between different types of charity, based on the recipient meditating or not).

- (v) The WM *yaw"gi* emphasises one specific type of meditative action as the ideal, namely 'insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na*), as opposed to 'concentration' (*tha-ma-ha'*) meditation. Only the former is unique to Buddhism. These concepts are treated in chapter 6.

In sum, WM is an activity portrayed as both ultra-Buddhist and ultra-Burmese. By skilful use of these five thematic oppositions, the selfconscious WM *yaw"gi* carves out a distinctive position for him/herself in the realm of contemporary socio-religious action *and* in the history of Buddhism. Whichever oppositions are drawn upon depends on the specific context. But there is a particular tendency to bring out oppositions (ii) and (iii) (both bound up with Buddhist practice as against scriptural learning) in the context of the historical question. Each chapter of this thesis examines one or more of these oppositions; where a chapter does so specifically, I have put the relevant conceptual opposition on top as a reminder.

Wi'pat-tha-na meditation (WM) defined

As already noted, *wi'pat-tha-na* is the *summum bonum* of Buddhist practice. *Wi'pat-tha-na* is the Burmese pronunciation of the word written in romanised Pali as *vipassanā*. In Burmese it is glossed as 'beholding in a special, attentive manner the mind and the objects of senses for such symptoms as impermanence [suffering, and egolessness]'.⁵ Childers (1909:580) gave its Pali meaning as 'seeing clearly, spiritual insight... produced by the successful exercise of ecstatic meditation... an attribute of Arhatship' [*ya-han"da*], whereas Rhys Davids & Stede (1921-5:627) preferred 'inward vision, insight, intuition, introspection'. WM refers to a variety of techniques by which the *yaw"gi* comes to terms with the true nature of existence and develops an intuitive knowledge of the interrelationship between suffering (*dok-hka'*, P. *dukkha*), the impermanent nature of existence (*a-neik-sa'*, P. *anicca*), and the illusion of selfhood (*a-nat-ta'*, P. *anattā*).

The Sun-lun" Hsa-ya-daw (n.d.:18) held that 'Insight (*vipassana*) is the elimination of concepts (*pannati*) to penetrate to the real (*paramattha*) for the winning of knowledge.' Or in the Ma-ha-si's (1979:16) words, WM allows us 'to know the real state of the mind', to transcend 'the wrong view of holding mind as Person, self or living entity ... which grows up from childhood to the age of manhood', and to realise our life-existence is 'a continuous process of elements of mind which occurs singly at a time and in succession'.

There are two outstanding points about the Burmese WM methods. First, at the basis of most popular WM techniques is contemplation on the body (*ka-ya nu'pat-tha-na*),⁶ which is widely considered to be the most convenient and appropriate for this era. Second, today's methods have been adapted for mass teaching, with much less scope for varying methods individually than is characteristic of one-to-one teaching.⁷ Teachers may at times use their personal judgement to vary the method depending on the characterological disposition and needs of particular individuals, but this is often difficult in large centres with large numbers meditating at the same time.

There are three important points to note about the historical development of WM. First, where in the past the ideal was to practise in solitude in the forests away from inhabited areas, WM today is being practised by large numbers of *yaw"gi*⁸ under the 'civilised' conditions of the urban environment. There is an ancient link between meditation and the forest, because meditation used to entail leaving the inhabited areas for the forest. This is rooted in the traditional division

- 5 *Yok-nan hnit-ba" go a-neik-sa' sa' thaw" lek-hka-na a" hpyin' a-hlu" shu'hsin-gyin gyin"* (MAA 1980:153).
 6 e.g. The Ma-ha-si 'has found that the yogis generally do well if they have to use the *kayanupassana* satipat-thana out the the four satipatthanas as their main bhavana.' (U Nu in Burma Pitaka Association 1985: 119). There is much less emphasis on contemplation on feeling (*wei-da-na nu'pat-tha-na*), contemplation on mind (*seik-ta nu'pat-tha-na*), and contemplation on mind-objects (*da-ma' nu'pat-tha-na*).
 7 These individual requirements have been isolated from the canonical and commentarial literature by King (1980:32).
 8 *Yaw"gi* is the Burmese word for 'yogi', or 'meditator'. For a detailed note on the term *yaw"gi* see endnotes.

between 'forest dwelling monks' (*a-rin-nya'wa-thi*), who would tend to devote themselves to meditation and ascetic practices, and 'village dwelling monks' (*ga-ma'wa-thi*), who would devote themselves to preaching. Monasteries in the forest tradition are normally prefixed with 'forest' (*taw"ya'*) as in 'forest monastery' (*taw"ya' kyaung*). This also explains why a common designation of the 40 meditation objects is 'the forty forests' (*taw"lei"ze*) (Aw-ba-tha 1975:276). Though many WM centres are not really located at any significant distance from the inhabited areas, this identification of meditation with the forest is still present in such centres, where the forest has been brought into the centre in the form of a large picture on the wall (as in the Chan"myei' Yeik-tha).

Second, up to the 19th century meditation appears to have been conceived of as a monastic prerogative, suitable for monks already advanced in knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures and in age, whereas today it is an activity conceived of as suited also for unordained persons of all kinds—even non-Buddhists.

Third, WM has come to be institutionalised as never before. Certainly there is no evidence to indicate that WM was ever as institutionalised as today, with meditation centres dedicated to teaching and accommodating large groups of laity, monks, and nuns of all ages.

WM sources

Burmese meditation teachers and meditators turn for guidance and explanation to a large number of canonical texts and commentaries, as well as the biographies and preachings of their favourite teachers, some of which are analysed in chapter 3 and 7. But there are three main doctrinal texts which are of particular importance to teachers of WM and to Buddhist practice as a whole.

(i) *Da-ma-set-kya*

The place of meditation in Buddhism is established in the *Da-ma-set-kya*, or 'The Great Discourse on the Wheel of Dhamma'⁹. This is the Buddha's First Discourse, preached after his enlightenment to the five ascetics at Isipatana (modern Sarnath) near Benares. Its basic message about the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path has been characterised (along with the Buddha's Second Sermon) as the main source of Buddhist knowledge¹⁰ and as containing 'everything necessary to show forth the way to Nibbana'.¹¹

Fundamental to the Buddhist teachings are the Four Noble Truths: that life is suffering

9 As translated by U Ko Lay in *Ma-ha-si* (1981c:1).

10 U Thittila in his Introductory Remark to Pe Maung Tin (1978)'s translation of the *Da-ma-set-kya*.

11 Rahula (1978:69) wrote about the First Discourse, 'The most important discourse ever given by the Buddha on mental development ("meditation").... This discourse is so highly venerated in tradition that it is regularly recited not only in Buddhist monasteries, but also in Buddhist homes with members of the family sitting round and listening with deep devotion. Very often bhikkhus recite this *sutta* by the bed-side of a dying man to purify his last thoughts.'

(*dok-hka' thit-sa*), that suffering has causes within ourselves (*tha-mok-ti' thit-sa*), that suffering can be transcended (*ni'raw"da thit-sa*), and that the Noble Eightfold Path must be followed to achieve emancipation from the rounds of rebirth (*mek-ga' thit-sa*). The Noble Eightfold Path includes: 1. right understanding, 2. right thought, 3. right speech, 4. right action, 5. right livelihood, 6. right effort, 7. right mindfulness, and 8. right concentration. It is also known as 'The Middle Way' because it avoids the extremes between seeking happiness through unprofitable sensual pleasure and through selfmortification.

In the Ma-ha-si tradition, wherever a meditation centre was newly opened, they 'always employed this Sutta as an inaugural discourse' (Ma-ha-si 1981c:2). It is also the most commonly recited of discourses among Burmese Buddhists in general, not just among meditators.¹²

(ii) *Tha-di'pa-htan thok*

The most comprehensive statement made by the Buddha specifically on the subject of meditation is available in the form of his discourse on 'The Presence of Mindfulness'¹³ (*Tha-di'pa-htan thok*). The longest version of the discourse is approximately 4,000 words long.¹⁴ This discourse is characterised as 'the one and only way for the purification (of the minds) of beings, for overcoming sorrow and lamentation, for the complete destruction of (physical) pain and (mental) distress, for attainment of the noble (Ariya) Magga, and for the realization of Nibbana. That (only way) is the practice of the four methods of Steadfast Mindfulness, Satipatthana.' (U Nu in Burma Pitaka Association 1985: 113).

It explains this fourfold method in terms of 21 subsidiary methods:

- mindfulness of body (*ka-ya nu'pat-tha-na*) - meaning awareness of: breathing (in- and exhalation of air), of bodily posture (walking, standing, sitting and lying), clear comprehension (in moving, wearing, eating, drinking, chewing, etc.), of the 32 parts of the body, of all functions of the body (looking, bending, stretching, excreting, speaking, etc.), of

12 As the Ma-ha-si (1981c:1) commented, Rare is the person, amongst the laity of this Buddhist country of the Union of Burma, who has not heard of this discourse. Numerous are those who have committed this Sutta to memory. There are in almost every town and village, religious groups under the name of 'the Wheel of Dhamma Reciting Society', devoted to group recitation of the Sutta and listening to it. The Buddhist followers regard this Sutta with great esteem and veneration as it was the First Dispensation of the Blessed One.

13 It is also known as 'The Domain of Mindfulness', 'The Foundations of Mindfulness' (Nyanaponika 1962:9-10). The term *Tha-di'pat-htan* is made up of *Tha-di'*, meaning primarily 'attention' or 'awareness', and secondarily 'memory' or 'remembrance', and *ok-pat-hta-na*, meaning 'placing near one's mind', or 'keeping present', 'remaining aware', 'establishing'.

14 This Sermon occurs twice in the scriptures, namely: as Discourse 10 in the Middle Collection of Discourses (*Majjhima nikāya*), and as Discourse 22 of the Long Collection (*Dīgha nikāya*). The latter is an enlarged version of the former, with an added explanation of the Four Noble Truths. Some have qualified this *thok* as: 'the heart of Buddhist meditation' (*dhamma-hadaya*); 'the Only Way' (*ekāyano magga*), and as 'the heart of the entire doctrine' (*dhamma-kāya*) (Nyanaponika 1962:7). Conze (1975:25) said about the Satipatthana Sutta, 'The Canonical Scriptures are replete with references to meditation. The most important single text is the Sutra on the Application of Mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutta).'

the bodily elements (earth, water, fire and air), and the nine cemetery contemplations. None of these need be practised strenuously—they should merely be mindfully observed without attempting to exercise control. They all serve to allow oneself to gradually become detached of the importance of one's body.

- mindfulness of feeling (*wei-da-na nu'pat-tha-na*) - mindfulness of one's feelings such as pleasantness/unpleasantness, neutral feelings, or worldly/unworldly feelings, etc.
- mindfulness of mind (*seik-ta nu'pat-tha-na*) - awareness of one's state of mind such as lust no lust, hate/no hate, deluded/not deluded, distracted/not distracted, ... concentrated/unconcentrated, etc.
- mindfulness of mental objects (*da-ma' nu'pat-tha-na*) - on the five hindrances (sense-desire), anger, sloth & torpor, agitation & worry, doubt), the five aggregates of clinging (arising and passing away of: material form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness), the six internal and external sense-bases (eye/visible forms, ear/sounds, nose/smells, tongue/flavours, body/tactual objects, mind/mind-objects), the seven factors of enlightenment (mindfulness, investigation of reality, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, equanimity), the four noble truths (suffering, origin of suffering, ³cessation of suffering, path to cessation of suffering)

(iii) *Wi'thok-di mek*

Another text highly regarded by WM practitioners is *Wi'thok-di mek* (P. *Visudhimagga*), a meditation manual by the monk-scholar Buddhaghosa around the 4th century AD in Sri Lanka. It is a substantial document, and *The path of purity*, its English translation¹⁵ by Pe Maung Tin (1921-5), amounts to almost 900 pages.¹⁶ Divided into three main sections, namely on the Buddhist dimensions of 'morality' (*thi-la*) (chaps 1-2), 'concentration' (*tha-ma-di*) (chaps 3-13), and 'understanding' (*pyin-nya*) (chaps 14-23), it is the latter section on understanding that is considered the fruit of WM, with morality and concentration being necessary preconditions to WM.

The approach of the thesis

As noted earlier, this thesis does not purport to be a definitive account of Buddhist practice in Burma. Such comprehensive description would be premature considering the lack of such

15 Another translation of *Visudhimagga* comes from Sri Lanka, namely by Nanamoli Thera, *The Path of Purification* (Colombo, 1956).

16 In 1957 Ma-ha-si wrote the introduction to *Wi'thok-di mek* to refute Indian Professor Dhammananda Kosambhi's (1950) slander of its author, Ma-ha-bok-da'gaw'tha'.

studies hitherto. It does not necessarily aim to explain Buddhist practice in divine-experiential terms as intended by the Buddha or as experienced by the Buddhist, nor in the historical-factual terms as studied by Buddhologists and Indologists.¹⁷ In particular, it aims to explain the world of Buddhist practice in anthropological terms by attempting to understand the statements of a small number of live Burmese informants and a limited number of Burmese texts, and by using these to catalogue and describe popular Burmese perceptions of Buddhist practice.

Most chapters stand by themselves, and it should be possible to follow the arguments as they are presented. But because the Burmese historical background to the subject is somewhat complex and has not been described elsewhere, chapter 1 is a particularly full chapter which may be read through quickly the first time around, and then dipped into in relation to the other chapters. End-notes, arranged alphabetically by subject at the back of this thesis, provide the reader with more detail on important subjects to which cross-references are made throughout the thesis.

An important aim with this thesis has been to build up a thorough understanding of the terms Burmese people themselves have used to explain their situation. Such understanding is delicate and easily swayed by the 'Pali trap'. By this I mean the unquestioned acceptance of the meanings of particular Pali loanwords in the vernacular context as being of the same order as that attributed to it in the Buddhological and Indological literature or, indeed, in the work of other anthropologists. I have already referred to this in the note on Pali loanwords, and will return to this problem in chapter 8. Suffice to say here that I have tried to maximise use of Burmese sources, and to minimise bringing in either Buddhological or anthropological sources unless they significantly contributed to what I wanted to say.

There is a paucity of English language sources on the issues this thesis deals with; the Burmese Buddhist dimensions of history, meditation, and hagiography have hardly been covered. In order to comprehend these subjects I have spent more time on research than I had initially anticipated. Burmese sources have been consulted in some detail for: chapter 2 on terms for 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhendom'; chapter 3 on the history of Buddhist practice; chapter 4 on novitiation; chapter 5 on the Ma-ha-si meditation centre; and in particular chapter 7 (together with appendix F) on two biographies of meditation teachers and the place of these within the history of Burmese biographical literature. The endnotes and appendices were introduced to help lessen the overall detail of these chapters, which should improve the flow and readability of the overall arguments.

As will be noted in chapter 6, the distinction between the two main types of meditational

17 For general books on the doctrinal aspects of meditation see in particular Edward Conze's *Buddhist Meditation* (Unwin Books, 1956) and Paravehara's *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1962).

practice—'concentration' (*tha-ma-hta*) and 'insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na*) meditation—is by no means a simple one. The reader may wish to leaf through chapters 2 and the last part of chapter 6 to get a sense of what these terms mean.

Names have been kept confidential wherever thought appropriate so as to safeguard them from identification, and I have used either the terms of address I used to refer to these persons or acronyms instead. This does not apply to the names of meditation teachers.

Summary of the thesis

Part I of this thesis is dedicated to the theme of history.

Chapter 1. Here I describe the development of Buddhist practice in linear time—characteristic of the western sense of history but not necessarily of a meditator's (whose cyclical view of history is explained in chapter 3). Over the last century Buddhist practice has come to flourish in Burma more than ever before. It first became apparent during the third quarter of the 19th century, at a time when the monarchy was threatened by the advance of the foreigner; the earliest record of the interest King Min"don" [1853-78] had in WM are a chronicle written in 1861, and a work he commissioned from his head monk he is known to have complained of the materialist orientation of writers on established royal discipline, which he characterised as curry without salt (meditation). Though monks wrote at his behest on meditation, WM became truly popular during the post-Min"don" era. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw proved to be one of the earliest and most influential monks to teach WM; he first meditated in the forest with the threat of the foreigner's advance in 1887. Teaching of WM began to flourish, gradually first, during the colonial period, but particularly strongly after independence with renewed government support for Buddhism, and it continued to grow during the post-1962 military period. Burmese governments—first royal and later secular government—exercised an important influence on the popularisation of WM in Burma, sometimes intentionally, but sometimes not. The type of influence varied; during the royal period the king set an example by meditating himself, and by ordering monks to write on the subject; during the colonial period, particularly during the 1930s, WM provided an escape from the state of corruption of nationalist leaders and the economic depression; during early independence Burmese Government fostered the institutionalisation of WM in the form of meditation associations and centres; and during military rule the radical policies of demonetisation and disincentive to productive investment of profits turned Buddhist institutions, including the meditation centres, into competitive investment opportunities. The chapter also shows how, once popular among laity and monks, Burmese governments sought to harness and control the ideology and organisation that came with WM; both to cultivate their own legitimacy, and to divert the flow of funds into the meditation centre towards economically productive purposes.

Chapter 2. This chapter explains practice traditions as a reaction to the external (opposition (i)

'pure' indigenous vs 'impure' foreign). The advent of the foreigner, colonial rule and missionary work are held responsible by many Burmese for change in Buddhism, which is epitomised by the allegation that Baptist missionary Judson invented the current Burmese term for 'Buddhism' (*bok-da'ba-tha*). The Burmese terms for 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' are further investigated, and a distinction is made between 'Buddhism' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*), the ancient scriptural term for Buddhism, and 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*), the recent but popularly used term. It is suggested that the distinction is born from a concern to separate out 'pure' (i.e. the original teachings) from 'Buddhism-created-by-man' (i.e. 'religion' as shared with other peoples) respectively. The use of these terms is linked to two different attitudes to Buddhism: one which looks back and mourns at the interruption of inherited Buddhist customs, and another which looks forward and claims a new era in the self-creation of pure Buddhist knowledge through WM.

Chapter 3. Here I address opposition ii above, namely the recent WM history as a problem within Burmese Buddhism expressed in terms of the opposition between 'practice' and 'scriptural learning'. The history of Burmese 'practice' became first known when it was first documented in 20th century texts when hitherto 'silent' meditation masters began to teach 'silent' texts to the Burmese at large, as explained (by a Burmese scholar) through the analogy of growth from a static puddle to a roaring river (see introductory quote above). A new lineage evolved which is widely referred to as a 'practice' lineage, membership of which is not determined by ordination and scriptural learning but by teaching of WM in practice (opposition (iii) spiritual ordination through WM over formal ordination). But the fact that WM cannot be transmitted in itself and requires the intermediary of text, compromises the ideal that the tradition of 'practice' is only a tradition of personal experience; thereby the WM tradition is continuously in danger of evolving back into 'mere words'.

Part II deals with the institutionalisation of WM. Some comparison with the monastery was inevitable here. One might expect—since Buddhists now are thought capable of accessing the heights of Buddhist knowledge through WM practice as unordained laymen rather than monks—that the WM tradition need no longer concern itself with 'monasticism'. One might be led to expect that unordained *yaw"gi* would consider the role of the monk as unnecessary and expensive in upkeep, and that no monastic teachers are needed. Instead, the reverse is true; there is an exceptional preoccupation with monasticism. Even unordained WM *yaw"gi* still accept Buddhism as crucially dependent on monks for its continuity.

Chapter 4. The novitiation ceremony initiates sons into novicehood and also remains a crucially important ritual to meditators. But there is a difference between novitiation ritual held at the meditation centre and the traditional style at the monastery. A three day ritual is truncated to half a

day, and the elements of the Brahmin (*beik-theikhsa-ya*), astrology, music, spirit propitiation, etc have been eliminated. Because novitiation at the meditation centre is less expensive, it could be argued that the duration and elaboration of these are all about economy on expenditure. But the economic 'cost' motive itself is not sufficient to explain participants' views of the difference. Both ceremonies are explained in terms of the 'otherworldly' vs 'worldly', and both are based on the need for maximising 'merit'; but they are based on entirely different ideas about what components in the ceremony constitute the 'otherworldly' and the 'worldly', and what is 'meritorious' or not. In the meditation centre, truncation of the otherwise lengthy monastic ceremony is justified by the claim that much of conventional ceremonial is of the 'worldly' type, because it entertains the laity with orchestras, clowns, etc. In their opinion the only way to maximise merit would be to maximise expenditure on the worthy components only—monks, meditators—with immediate relatives and friends being invited less to be entertained than to witness. This chapter looks again at opposition (i) 'pure' vs 'impure'.

Chapter 5. This chapter deals with the meditation centre, and finds that, despite the increased role of the unordained as teachers and meditators, the WM tradition is a 'monastic' tradition: meditation traditions may be more or less 'monastic' depending on whether the head teacher is a layman or a monk, but monastic language is used even in the most lay-oriented of meditation centres to classify property; additionally, monastic language is often used in interaction between lay *yaw"gi*. Nevertheless, meditation centre organisation and rationale differs substantially from the monastery in that it is more calculating, aiming to harness all resources towards one particular goal while the monastery has a multiplicity of goals which includes enjoyment of wide-ranging discussions with laity for which teachers in meditation centres rarely have the time. This has important implications for ideas about legitimate questions in scholarship, and the time available for friendly interaction. This chapter has a bearing on opposition (iii) conventional vs ultimate truth.

Part III deals with the relationship between WM and the lives of particular meditators.

Chapter 6. Here I present case studies to introduce the autobiographical accounts by unordained and not-so-highly educated meditators—i.e. it constitutes an account of the course their lives took as viewed by themselves, and serves as a general record of the 'discourse' of meditators. But it also serves to put on record the confusion which many unordained experience in relation to the distinction between 'concentration' meditation and WM (opposition v).

Chapter 7. In this chapter the written biographies of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, a monk teacher of WM (opposition i), and (U") Ba' Hkin, a lay teacher, are compared. After summarising the two hagiographies, it was found that they were structured by three major themes; scriptural learning

vs practice (opposition iii); the foreigner and the globalisation of WM; and the master-pupil relationship. I pose the problem of why in the Ba' Hkin biography only 26 out of 600 pages actually deal with his life, with the rest mainly dealing with the lives of his pupils. I examined the place of sacred biography in the Burmese biographical tradition; from a conference proceedings on the subject we learn that contemporary government-led literary efforts have been clearly harnessed to get away from a traditional subject-oriented towards the western author-oriented style biography, which involves writing information on the subject in more historically verifiable terms, and in a less elevated legendary style. Also, the Burmese term for biography (*at-htok-pat-ti*), apart from meaning 'description of a life'—could also mean 'event' or 'episode', or it could mean 'lineage', a range of lives following one after the other (see appendix F). This flexibility within this term is evident too in Burmese traditional history, where the Buddha's life literally 'envelops' both secular and Buddhist history and prefaces it. In this way the BK biography could be interpreted as a lineage-record in itself much like the Buddha biography is turned into a history. The Ma-ha-si biography too was initially published as the anchorage for a string of biographies of his pupils. This free movement on the part of Burmese concepts of 'biography' between life-episode, lineage, and history is what marks the Burmese biographical tradition; the emphasis is less on life between the cradle and the grave, than legacy continuously rewritten over time. This chapter concludes that while the ideology of Buddhist practice traditions as described in earlier chapters is an ideology which excludes foreign influence, and which operates outside of text and outside of monastic lineage, this chapter in fact shows quite the contrary. In the context of the discussion about the two biographies a reordering of our five conceptual oppositions has occurred: the foreigner reigns supreme, as does scriptural learning and the tradition of ordination.

Chapter 8. In this concluding chapter I return once again to the opposition between scriptural learning and practice (opposition ii) first dealt with in chapter 3. But this time I show how the emphasis on context by the anthropologist of Buddhism is problematic when it is couched in terms of an attack on the 'textual' approach to Buddhism of the Buddhologist and Indologist: not only are Burmese Buddhists themselves preoccupied with contemporary Buddhist texts such as hagiographies, but the anthropologist's methodology, to the extent that even the current concept of 'context' is itself textually derived. Furthermore, anthropologists have tended to adopt romanised Pali, to understand Buddhist terms cross-culturally in terms of the definitions given by Indological scholars, and to take Indological texts as departure points for their own treatment of Buddhism in contemporary societies. A more sophisticated awareness of the text-context debate is advocated which transcends the simple minded opposition between Buddhism as doctrine/text vs Buddhism as practice/context.

1

The popularisation of Buddhist practice in Burma

When King (1980: 117) wrote that 'Vipassana is popular today for historical ... reasons', he hinted that there were specific historical reasons why WM, and Buddhist practice as a whole, should have become so popular in Burma today. But unfortunately, because he was embroiled in his interest in WM as a distant historical transformation of Hindu yoga techniques, he devoted little or no space to analyse the Burmese historical dimensions to this popularity. In this chapter I provide a brief analysis of the historical circumstances under which WM, and Buddhist practice as a whole, enjoyed an upsurge in popularity in Burma.

Between 1826 and 1948, British imperial rule was imposed in three phases upon Burma.¹ Three Anglo-Burmese wars in 1824-6, 1852, and 1885, led first to the annexation of Arakan and Tenasserim in the south, then Pegu, and finally Mandalay, the Burmese² royal capital in Upper Burma; by 1885 the whole country was under British rule. With its incorporation as a province of British India,³ the government of Burma changed from an order based on Buddhist principles and personal obligations to an indigenous king situated within the region, to an order based on secular and impersonal foreign military and commercial interests imposed by British colonial government from outside. It is during this period of contraction of the Burmese 'monarchic' and

1 See end-notes, 'Burma'

2 By 'Burmese' I mean those ethnic groups who are subject to rule under the nation-state of Burma. By 'Burmans' I mean all those whose first language is Burmese. For further information on the distinction between 'Burmese' and 'Burman' see end-notes 'Burman/Burmese'.

3 Hall (1968:730) referred to attachment of Burma to the Indian Empire—though 'the most natural thing to do' as conquest was organised by the Government of India—nevertheless as 'Britain's greatest mistake in dealing with Burma'. He pointed out that, while Burma had its own long-established methods of administration, with colonization 'administrative layout' had to conform to the Indian model, but which by necessity in respect of 'administrative practice' had to conform to Burmese custom. Indian Government administrators, without knowledge of Burmese language and local Burmese custom, emphasised administration through village headmen responsible for single villages, which conflicted with the traditional Burmese type of government through the headman of a circle of villages (*myo'thu-gyi* or *taik-thu-gyi*).

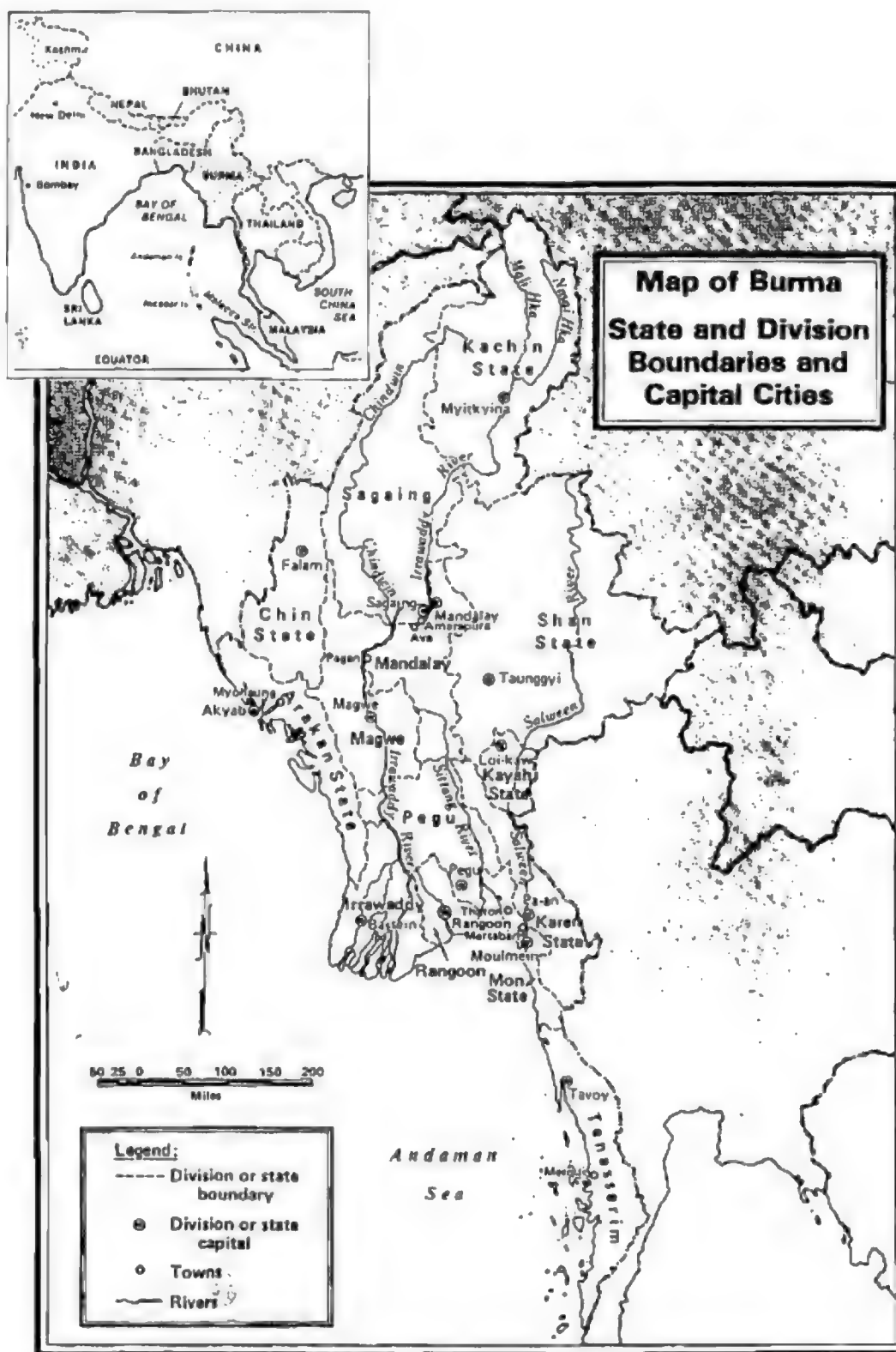


Fig. 2. Map of Burma (Steinberg 1982).

intrusion of the 'foreign' universe that meditation practice, in particular *wi'pat-tha-na*, became increasingly popular.

One important monk who lived through this change in the government of Burma was the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1846-1923) is widely regarded as the earliest populariser of *wi'pat-tha-na* practice, and as one of the earliest sources for the Burmese *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation methods. He is indispensable in many meditation lineages.

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (Nya-na') takes to meditation

In 1846 the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw was born in Sain-pyin village, near Di-pe"yin" Township in Shwei-bo District. At the age of 8 he went to study with Hsa-ya-daw U" Nan-da' at Hpyauk-bin monastery, in the Sain-pyin Kyaung"ma' monastic cluster. He then attended the Myin-tin-daik Monastery in his native village at the age of 10, and was ordained as a novice at the same monastery at the age of 15 (whence he received his monastic name (Shin) Nya-na'da-za'). He left the order for six months at 18 to work on his father's fields and to study astrology, but was ordained as a fully-fledged monk at the age of 20, also at the same monastery. By the age of 23 he had learnt so much from the scriptures (but also astrology and poetry), that he had exhausted all there was to learn in the village monastery, and so he left his native village, as ambitious village monks were apt to do, for the Golden City of Mandalay (Shwei-myo'daw).

By 1869 Nya-na' found himself a teacher in (Shin) Thok-da'tha-na' (1815-88), the Second Hsa-ya-daw of the Min-ga-la-san Monastery, located just north of Mandalay. This monk was very learned, enjoyed great prestige, and had been bestowed many favours by Burmese royalty, including King Tha-ra-wa-di, and King Min"don" and his Queens. This monk also occupied a leading position among the eight member-strong Thu'da-ma' Council, appointed by King Min"don" on 26 June 1860 in lieu of a single Head of the Order (Tha-tha-na-baing), which served until the reappointment of a head of the Order in the Taung-daw Hsa-ya-daw in 1866 (who was head until 1880). The credentials of the preceptor of Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's new teacher, the The"in" Hsa-ya-daw (1763-1839), were equally impressive.⁴

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's arrival at the San-kyauung" monastery in 1869 therefore heralded his incorporation into the lineage of one of the most influential monastic factions in Upper Burma

4 The teacher of (Shin) Thok-da'tha-na' (Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's teacher) had been worshipped by Prince Tha-ra-wa-di during the reign of King Ba'gyi'daw (around 1819), and had been Head of the Order (Tha-tha-na-baing) from 1837 until his death in 1839 during the reign of Tha-ra-wa-di as king.

(see Hla' Tha-mein (1961:200)). It was an exciting period. King Min"don" had started his campaign to purify Buddhism in 1856, when the Royal Order on the Purification of the Religion (Da-ma' wi'ni") had been passed. By 4 May 1868, the year before the Le-di's arrival in Mandalay⁵, the copying of the Pi'ta-ka' onto 729 stones was finished. But a further important event occurred after the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw joined the royal capital: the Fifth Synod organized by King Min"don" (reign:1853-1878) took place two years afterwards in Mandalay between 15 April-12 September 1871. As the previous Fourth Buddhist Synod recognized by the Burmese had taken place in Sri Lanka almost 2,000 years previously between 29-13 BC, this was a major historical event.⁶ Though still young with only 5 rainy seasons as a fully-fledged monk, the Le-di contributed to this event by completing research for the San Kyaung" Hsa-ya-daw, who used this material to contribute to the Fifth Synod on Buddhist Philosophy (the a-bi'da-ma). All the prospects pointed towards the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw one day too, like his teacher, being honoured for his teaching by the Burmese Court. Such recognition would allow him a platform to preach to the subjects of the Burmese monarch.

Yet not long after the Synod, foreigners threatened to take over the country; the British had already annexed Lower Burma during the first two Anglo-Burmese Wars since 1824, halving the area of suzerainty of the Burmese monarchy. They were threatening to annex Upper Burma too, including the royal capital where the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw found himself. The Le-di biography described how this monk faced the dangers of the foreigner's impending destruction of Buddhism:

In the year 1885, the foreigners had already captured King Thi-baw". When the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw learnt that Burma was likely to be governed by foreigners, the following occurred to this Noble Great monk. 'If foreigners are to rule Burma, it will cause many terrestrial animals to be killed and destroyed. The reason is that western foreigners are the type of people who have appetite for enormous quantities of meat. If they arrive in Burma, they will set up killing factories of cows, of pigs, of goats, where so many such creatures will meet their death.' After musing thus, he spoke the following to the monks:

'Monks, the foreigners are about to rule Burma now. When they rule, many creatures are likely to die. Among these creatures, it is the cow that is the saviour of man's life. This animal is both our mother as well as our father, and mankind is much in debt with them.⁷ Therefore, from this day onwards, I shall not eat cow's meat, and please I implore you not to eat it either.'

From the day he had spoken like this, he eliminated cow meat from his diet.
(Wun-ni-ta' 1956:28)

5 Among the activities by King Min"don" to purify the order were the following. On 2 July 1856 the members of families belonging to about ten reverend monks were honoured with titles by King Min"don" and were declared exempt from all levies. On 14 October 1860 the copying of the Pi'ta-ka' stones began. On 26 June 1860 the Thu'da-ma' Council was appointed. On 11 March 1865 the copying of the Pi'ta-ka' onto palm-leaves in gold and ordinary ink with stylus was completed. On 19 March 1865 the Thu'da-ma' Council proclaimed that all bad monks should be suppressed, promptly endorsed by King Min"don" on 21 March the same year. On 27 January 1866 (U") Nyei-ya'da-ma', the Supreme Leader of the Religion died.

6 For information on the Burmese view of the Buddhist Synods see end-notes, *Thin-ga-ya'na*

7 Note that the cow here means something very different from among the Hindu—it is not because it represents the incarnation of a deity, but because it is man's best friend in that they are used for ploughing the fields and provide nourishment.

Soon after the foreigners had taken over Upper Burma, the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw prepared himself for the 'destruction of the era' (*ka-la' pyet thi*); on 15 February 1887 he 'retreated into the frightening Le-di Forest of which many alleged that there were malignant ghosts, that it was rough and a spooky forest'. He found a big tree, and resolved, 'That tree is an excellent place, and he meditated under it'. Through the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's presence, the forest became a friendly forest. (Wun-ni-ta' 1956:29).

And so it was with the gradual contraction of the 'monarchical' universe at the beginning of the 19th century, and with the expansion of the 'foreign' universe through the encroachment of the British, that the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw took to the forest in meditation; this was to eventually inspire Burmese Buddhists to take more than a passing interest in meditation. He contributed to the vernacularisation of Buddhism by writing and preaching about meditation mostly in simple Burmese (not Pali), and he touched and inspired the imagination of the Buddhist masses.⁸ Furthermore, he set up and serviced one of the earliest Buddhist missionary organisations aimed at making Buddhism known abroad with the foreigner. In 1914 he wrote *Wi'pat-tha-na mek-ga' di-pa-ni* [A commentary on the way of WM], 'for the benefit of European Buddhists' (Wun-ni'ta' 1956:175), which stands as an early record of the role of WM in a Buddhism increasingly selfconscious of the encroachment of the foreigner.

The historical context

During the last two centuries important changes have taken place in the ecologically, culturally and linguistically diverse region in mainland South East Asia,⁹ known to us as Burma. These

8 See end-notes, 'Le-di Hsa-ya-daw'.

9 See end-notes, South East Asia.

changes have deeply affected the population of this region, its social structure, its ethnic composition, its formal government, its economy, its educational system, and its religious organisation.

Colonial government encouraged immigration within, and migration to Burma from abroad, and allowed foreign commercial interests free reign to exploit Burma's resources as never before. As Taylor (1987:67) put it:¹⁰ 'What most distinguished the colonial state from its predecessor was that it was self-consciously imposed by a powerful foreign empire which operated under radically different notions about the relationship of the state to society, to the economy, and to the individual than those behind the political and administrative instruments of the Burmese monarchs.'

Colonisation of Burma was in part precipitated by factors external to the country. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was of immense consequence¹¹ because, by cutting the cost of transport of people and goods, it helped to turn Burma into a profitable supplier of raw materials to the west and its dependent territories, while at the same time it helped to turn Burma into a profitable consumer of western manufactured products. Burma was gradually drawn into the international economy through trade,¹² and the Burmese economy underwent irrecoverable structural changes.¹³ International demand for agricultural produce, but more specifically

10 Taylor (1987:66) saw the following major processes as part of the 'rationalization' of the state during the period 1825-1942: the introduction of a distinction between public and private spheres of life in government not operative hitherto; the state having an 'artificial quality' in that its main purpose became to serve as 'an instrument intended to create and free wealth as efficiently as possible in the context of a larger set of external Imperial, economic, political and strategic interests' whereby it could afford to ignore the many social consequences of its policies which an independent government could not have; a greater degree of 'formal centralization' with more control over society through increased use of money; the requirement for new skills for employment and social mobility to service it; the Western concept of law on which it was based. Above all, however, it was attitudes to trade that set the precolonial apart from the colonial mode of government, '...it was the new rulers' concern with the growth of trade which set it apart from the government of the kings. This was the core feature of its own internal rationality, reflecting the nature of its parent, the British East India Company. The precolonial state grew and expanded organically in response to internal political ideas, pressures and challenges until near its demise. The colonial state was not only imposed by the world's then greatest trading empire, but sought to remake the country in its own image and thus had the will to re-shape internal social and economic structures to suit its own interests.'

11 It is interesting how one single development in international sea transport can have such important effect on the history of Burma, where it resulted in significant migration patterns towards the fertile coasts of the country and the reclamation of large areas of land there for commercial agriculture. Furnivall (1957:42) said about this:
'...The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869...revolutionised the economic relations between East and West and therefore also their political and social relations. The essential difference between Burma's pre-Suez and post-Suez economy may be summed up in a single sentence: before the Suez Canal was opened surplus produce might not be worth reaping; since the Suez Canal was opened surplus produce has usually been able to find a market.'

12 Taylor (1987:70) found that trade was the major contributory factor to fundamental changes in Burma.

13 The most widely quoted authority on Burma's colonial economy is J.S. Furnivall's *An Introduction to the Political Economy of Burma* (1957). J. Russell Andrus' *Burmese Economic Life* (1948) may also be fruitfully consulted. From a Burmese perspective one might consult Tun Wai *Economic Development of Burma from 1800 to 1940* (1961), though this is still largely based on secondary European sources.

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1987: 67
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rice—during the 1940s Burma had been the world's largest exporter of rice—led to an enormous expansion of land area cultivated in Lower Burma¹⁴ and to large-scale migration from Upper Burma to fertile but sparsely inhabited Lower Burma. Rangoon, which could provide the international port facilities necessary for international sea trade, rapidly grew in size and succeeded Mandalay, the last royal capital. Indigenous industries, such as ship building, salt making, and textiles, declined because these could not compete with the imported consumer goods.

But relations between indigenous ethnic groups were complicated by the way British policy dealt with the labour requirements of the new colonial order; it encouraged immigration from abroad, but it also favoured certain ethnic groups in Burma for certain types of employment over other ethnic groups. It encouraged large-scale immigration of Chinese and in particular Indians, who, together with a number of non-Buddhist indigenous ethnic groups such as the Chin and Karen, played a crucial role in the development of the new politico-economic order, especially in trade, banking, the army, and the colonial civil service. The Burmans, on the other hand, were drawn into the cash economy mainly through agriculture.¹⁵

Between 1900-1930 annual immigration from India averaged 150,000 per year, of whom only a fifth settled in Burma, the remainder eventually returning to India. With the economic depression of the 1930s and the fall in the price of rice, the land held by Burmese peasants—who were unaccustomed to British notions of land rights and the legal obligations associated with

14 For statistics on the increased rate of reclamation of agricultural land in Lower Burma Delta since the opening of the Suez Canal see Furnivall (1957:47).

15 Furnivall (1957:43) referred to the replacement of 'domestic agriculture', based on cultivation for oneself, with 'commercial agriculture', based on cultivation for sale. The consequences were: more intensive cultivation of all land available; substitution of crops grown for the home market, such as millet, for crops destined for cash sale in the international market, such as ground-nut and cotton; the farmer became involved in cash purchase rather than cultivation of subsistence crops. Migration to Lower Burma by Upper Burmans was less than anticipated by the British Government, who then sought to encourage Indians to immigrate and work the land, but the Indian immigrants tended not to settle the land, finding work as labourers instead (see Furnivall 1957:49-50).

borrowing money—fell into the hands of the Chettyar¹⁶ money lenders who had been imported by the British from India. Inter-ethnic stresses were aggravated by competition for urban jobs between landless Burmese and the Indian and Chinese colonial immigrants. During this period serious anti-Indian (1930), anti-Chinese (1931)¹⁷ and anti-Muslim (1938) riots took place. Many Burmese became aware of their economic muscle in respect of production and consumption, and they organised themselves to resist by disrupting the economy: strikes spread to industries central to colonial government, boycotts were organised of western manufactured products, and the purchase of local produce was encouraged instead.

In 1937 Burma was separated from the Indian Empire and the Burmese were accorded for the first time limited parliamentary representation.¹⁸ The Japanese occupation of Burma from 1942 to 1945 prolonged this limited form of 'self government', this time under Japanese supervision.¹⁹ But Burma reverted to English control with the reconquest of the country by the allied forces in 1945. National Independence was passed to Burma's first democratically elected socialist government three years later on 4 January 1948.

Armed opposition and demands for independence by various ethnic groups soon threatened the newly elected government. In particular, the Government's declaration in 1961 of Theravada Buddhism (after the Sixth Synod) as the national religion strengthened opposition by non-Buddhist ethnic minorities. The army briefly took control during a 1958-60 emergency, and then a military coup took place in 1962, under which the declaration of Buddhism as State Religion was repealed. Under military control the Burma Socialist Programme Party was founded, and a new constitution was proclaimed in 1974 which took Burma to its one-party socialist democratic system in power during my fieldwork in 1981-82. Widespread protests in 1989 brought changes in Government and the promise of democratic multi-party elections on

16 Chetty - 'a member of any of the trading castes in S. India' (Yule & Burnell 1903).

17 Another important anti-Chinese riot took place much later in June 1967 during the Chinese Cultural Revolution (Steinberg 1982:83-4).

18 See Hall (1968:744) and Cady (1958:351-55, 387-424). Burma's separation from India was written into the Government of India Act of 1935 and took effect on 1 April 1937. Burma government came directly under British parliament, a separate Burma Office was created with an Under-Secretary for Burma, and the Secretary of State for India became also Secretary of State for Burma. On the Burmese side, it involved a nine member cabinet responsible to an elected House of Representatives, but the governor retained the right of veto as did a 36 member Senate. Cady said about this constitution, 'The constitution of 1935 was thus in no sense a radical instrument; it was definitely not intended to satisfy nationalists bent on promoting revolutionary objectives whether in the political or the economic field. It could and did afford valuable experience in parliamentary practice and an opportunity, hitherto denied, to come to grips with agrarian problems.'

19 Cady (1958:427-484) interpreted the Japanese occupation as 'a milestone in the political history of the country no less important than the British annexation of 1886' as it 'transferred the problem of Burma's political future from the more or less parochial context of direct relations with London and local party feuding to that of events of world import connected with a major shifting of the balance of power'. Most Burmese initially supported the Japanese against the British, but soon turned against the Japanese as well. Nevertheless it allowed a trained Burmese army to emerge which was to supply the leadership of later independent government.

27 May 1990, but party leaders have been under house arrest and power remains in the same military hands as before.

During early independence, Burmese government exercised a mild form of democratic socialism. It achieved some land-reform and a degree of nationalisation, but the post 1962 military socialist government adopted more radical socialist policies: demonetisation, nationalisation of all industry down to retail level, and severe restrictions on the import of foreign goods (though a black market in such products continued to flourish). Burma has in its post-1962 period been characterised by some western observers as a 'hermit nation',²⁰ because of its neutral and independent outlook on international affairs and its insular path of economic development. It did not opt for Commonwealth status; it is not part of ASEAN; and it even withdrew from the Non-Aligned Movement.

The century of colonial government also permanently transformed Burmese education beyond recognition.²¹ Christian missionary, and later government secular schools, took over the educational role hitherto fulfilled by the Burmese Buddhist monasteries. Sir Arthur Phayre's attempt to introduce secular subjects into the existing monastic syllabus failed due to a lack of support by the monks on the one hand, and due to the colonial government's preference for offering grants to voluntary non-government missionary schools and private associations on the other. The result was that alien secular and Christian values were introduced into the Burmese community through a new educational system operating almost entirely outside the monastery. This secular educational system was to have a profound effect on the lay-monk relationship, and persisted beyond the colonial period.

Burmese Buddhism underwent important changes during the colonial period.²² During the royal period the monastic order had been structured by royalty. The ruler's primary duty was as the chief patron of Buddhism. Though not exactly dependent on the monastic order for its legitimacy, it was nevertheless desirable to have the monastic order in sympathy with the ruling king. With the British conquest, the delicate interrelationship of mutual support of the monastic order and government was disturbed. The *tha-tha-na-baing*, a senior monk normally appointed by the king to advise on religious matters and who served as an instrument of control over the

20 Steinberg (1981:39).

21 One of the best sources on education in Burma is U Kaung (1963).

22 Changes in Burmese Buddhism during this period are documented in Mendelson (1975), though Smith (1965) and Cady (1958) also contain much useful information.

than-ga, was not reappointed by British government. Also, under British rule monks were no longer subject to the authority of their own monastic courts of law, but to the lay courts. 'Bogus' monks appeared, who did not follow the monastic code of conduct. Proliferation of monastic sects went unchecked, a development which was anxiously observed by many Buddhists, as it violated the ideal of monastic unity. It was alleged by some observers that colonial government, by its hands-off policy²³, changed Buddhism in a way which its active support of a *tha-tha-na-baing* and upholding of the monastic courts need not have done.

Such fundamental changes in Burmese life did not take place without protest in various ways.²⁴ During British colonial government, guerilla warfare was waged by former officers of the disbanded royal army until about 1890. Rebellions by at least five different royal pretenders were recorded between 1910 and 1932 (Cady 1958:310), amongst which was the Hsa-ya San uprising in 1930. All were quashed by the colonial powers. Politically active monks such as (U") Ok-ta-ma' (1897-1939) and (U") Wi'sa-ra' (1888-1929) also provided important opposition to colonial government in the 1920s. In 1935-36 a university student strike was organised in which the Shwei-da-gon Pagoda Platform was occupied, and whose leaders, Aung Hsan" and (U") Nu', were later to become important national leaders. Many university students went to Japan for military training where eventually the Burma Independence Army was founded, which initially supported Japanese liberation of Burma, but turned against the Japanese when it became clear that liberation by the Japanese meant 'occupation'. These old-time students held power during my fieldwork in 1981-82.

23 Hall (1968:733) pointed out that the Government of India could not support Burmese religious administration, despite the offer by the last *Tha-tha-na-baing* to preach submission to British rule (provided that the jurisdiction of the *Thu'da-ma* Council, the ecclesiastical commission, would be confirmed). Government of Burma was bound by the Queen's proclamation of 1858 after the Indian Mutiny ordering all British authorities in India to 'abstain from all interference with the religious belief of worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure.'

24 A comparison of the rebellions is to be found in *Burma and Japan: Basic Studies on Their Cultural and Social Structure*. (Tokyo: The Burma Research Group, 1987). In this volume: Toshikatsu Ito describes 'U Thuriya's Rebellion—the Anti-colonial Uprising in Late 19th Century Lower Burma'; and Kenji Ino, 'A Note on the Burmese Peasant Rebellion, 1930-1932—some Features of the Forming Process of the Rebel Bands'.

During the colonial period, Buddhism provided a very powerful idiom of opposition to foreign rule. Theravada Buddhism²⁵ unites Burmans, who constitute approximately three-quarters of Burma's population, with the Shan and the Mon, the largest indigenous ethnic groups. Theravada Buddhists together form an estimated 85% of Burma's population.²⁶ The Buddhist community reorganised themselves, setting up associations which challenged government covertly by asserting demands about Buddhist matters. Buddhists occasionally made spontaneous demands, such as banning the British from wearing footwear in pagodas and monasteries. But in the early 20th Century, new forms of Buddhist organisation emerged such as the Young Men Buddhist Association (YMBA), founded in 1906, which allied itself with other Buddhist associations into the Greater Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA: sometimes interpreted as Greater Council of Buddhist Associations) in about 1920; by which time it had become the umbrella organisation for over 200 similar but locally based Buddhist associations spread all over the country. The latter was in the forefront of opposition to colonial government through the formation of various *wun-tha-nu'*,²⁷ which organised resistance at the grass-root level of the village community. The YMBA and the GCBA also played a crucial role in negotiating the 1937 parliamentary reforms and in organising boycotts and strikes.

Wi'pat-tha-na practice

As noted earlier with reference to the life of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, it was with the threat of the British, towards the end of the Burmese monarchy, that some of the most renowned exponents

25 Though Theravada Buddhism is also commonly referred to as 'Hinayana', the term 'Theravada' is consciously employed here because Burmese Buddhists use the term *Hiti-ra'wa-da'*, or 'Teaching (or Way) of the Elders' in self-reference their Buddhism (see Stewart n.d.:1). The Mahayana/Hinayana distinction, meaning 'Great Vehicle'/'Small Vehicle', is mainly a Mahayana Buddhist classification, where Hinayana carries a derogatory meaning (see also Htel' Hlaing 1981b:79-83) for his views on the differences. Western writers often use the distinction 'Northern School' and 'Southern School', or 'Sanskrit' and 'Pali Buddhism' respectively instead. Areas where Theravada Buddhism is predominant are: Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Mahayana Buddhism: China, Japan, and Korea. In the opinion of many Western scholars of Buddhism, Theravada (Pali Southern School) Buddhism is closest to the original teachings of the Buddha.

26 The thirty odd million population of Burma comprises a great diversity of ethnic groups speaking roughly 120 distinct languages. Apart from the Burmans, constituting approximately three-quarters of this total population, the rest of the indigenous population, subdivided in order of decreasing size, are: Karen, Shan, Chin, Mon, Kachin, and Kayahs, and three-quarter of a million or so colonial and post-colonial immigrant Chinese and Indians.

27 Lit. 'own race organisations', these were set up as village political associations by the GCBA in 1921-22 'in an effort to bring public questions to the attention of the rural population' (Cady 1958: 234-5). See also Herbert (1982).

of WM became ^{increasingly} inclined towards studying and subsequently teaching WM. WM became increasingly popular among Burmese Theravada Buddhists, both laity and monks. Its popularity first showed with the opening up of meditation centres during the first decade of this century, grew during the depression of the 1930s, but developed most rapidly after National Independence in 1948. Unlike 'political' Buddhist institutions such as the YMBA (Young Men's Buddhist Association) and the GCBA (General Council of Buddhist Associations), the organisations supporting the teaching of WM were not, and still are not, primarily politically motivated; this is one of the reasons perhaps why these institutions have been allowed to endure through the many revolutionary changes in government. The fast rate of growth in meditation centres continues even today. Yet, as we shall see later, this did not prevent government (in particular the first Independence Government) from perceiving in these organisations instruments for political ends.

Burma is not the only country where WM has grown in popularity.²⁸ Indeed, a significant growth has taken place in other Buddhist countries and beyond. Its growth has been noted in Thailand, Laos and Sri Lanka also, and in many European countries meditation centres have been set up by masters from these countries. In the UK, for example, there are no less than three (albeit small) Burmese centres and several places where Thai meditation masters teach.

Nor is WM the only type of Buddhist meditation which has gained in popularity worldwide. Other types of Buddhism with an emphasis on meditation have shown enormous increases in following compared to Buddhist movements which did not have meditation at its heart, including Zen Buddhism in Japan; for example, the latter more than doubled its membership in Japan between 1966 and 1972 where other sects (Tendai, Nichiren and Pure Land) showed only modest increases (8, 16 and 19 % respectively) and at least one (Shingon) a serious decline (-6%) (Agency for Cultural Affairs 1972).

Nor is the popularity of meditation limited to Buddhism, for many meditative techniques have grown in popularity worldwide, including yoga and transcendental meditation. This trend in the popularity of meditation has worried the Catholic Church such that a Papal directive was

28 Of the work done on meditation in the forest tradition elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Carrithers (on Sri Lanka, 1983) and Tambiah (Thailand, 1984) are most comprehensive, while Gombrich's (Sri Lanka, 1983) and Maquet (Sri Lanka 1975a, 1975b, 1980) provide article size observations. Elaborate references to WM practice in the wider context of 'modernisation' are found in Bechert (Sri Lanka, 1966:49-50) and the unpublished thesis by Irvine (Thailand, 1982). Kornfield (1977) contains some useful observations on biography and methods of 6 different Thai meditation masters. Other literature is in the form of autobiographical episodes of meditation experiences, such as Hamilton-Merritt (Thailand, 1976), Lerner (1977, India—pp27-73; Sri Lanka pp85-145), and Dore (Laos, 1974). A few more casual references to WM may be found in Tambiah (1976:259-60, 417-23). Some of these sources refer to WM in Burma, such as Gombrich (1983:27-29), Bechert (1966:79-80), Keyes (1977:103), and Carrithers (1983:129,238).

Min"don" which documented Buddhist history up until this King's reign (between 1853-1878), we learn that King Min"don" showed an unusual interest in meditation. Pyin-nya Tha-mi' (1861:152)³⁰ observed that King Min"don" not only instructed the members of his harem on impermanence and the desirability to 'long only for the absence of rolling on, not for rolling on':

He [Min"don"] himself also always made an effort toward calmness and intuition. But as the kings who are lords of countries, have many legitimate duties, sometimes they do not get a chance to give themselves up to meditation. As such he would give himself up to meditation even at the time of letting out the excrement from his body. He would not spend time in vain. He would also bring from the cemetery the bones of human heads, skulls and the like that were called inauspicious in the world, and having had them turned into tooth-picks or other similar things he would place them near him and accumulate the merit produced by the meditation on the bones and the like.³¹

Elsewhere in Pyin-nya Tha-mi' (1861:150) we find further reference to the great interest King Min"don" showed in meditation

Then at the lapse of four years, in the month of Vesakha [Wi'tha-hka], April-May, when he together with his queen was besprinkled on a great flat roof of a palace 'he illuminated also the Wheel of the Conqueror, as did Asoka the Great and others. Having held back the shameless and supported the scrupulous in his country, he applied himself to gifts and moral precepts and meditation as did King Nimi and others'.

It should be noted that by the time King Min"don" developed his interest in meditation, the British had already annexed Lower Burma, and this king only ruled over half his former kingdom. In popular perception, WM is linked to the degree of suffering people experience. Thus, if there is too little suffering, conditions for WM are not optimal because they cannot realise impermanence—this is the case in the upper heavens too. On the other hand, if there is too much suffering, people cannot concentrate sufficiently to meditate—this is the case in the lower realms. In fact, only the human condition is truly suited to WM meditation. The point is that the interest by King Min"don" in meditation on impermanence fits in with the enormous changes his kingdom were subject to, and in coping with his own sufferings as a result. These same conditions were present—as noted already—when the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw evolved an interest in meditation.

Royal patronage during the 19th century played an important role in the development of the older literature on meditation available to us now.³² Royalty issued requests with the monastic order for solutions to problems, which were then answered in writing. From one such work ,

30 See also the quote in Ferguson (1975:236).

31 This interest in impermanence and death on the part of King Min"don" is independently confirmed by Major Phayre whose interview with the King is reported in 1855 (*Burma Digest*, xii-xviii, 1940, pp 53), where it is noted that the king had 'human skeletons made of wood, and so arranged that the actions of the joints in sitting and rising should be shown'.

32 See chapter end-note, 'Royal Support for scriptural learning'.

namely *Thu'ya-za mek-ga di-pa-ni kyan*", written some time between 1853-1866 by Hsa-ya-daw Nyei-ya', the Tha-tha-na-baing³³ under King Min"don", we learn that the king commissioned this in order to learn more about meditation. Royal interest in meditation appears to have been something of a novelty up until then, for the author of the work suggested:

It is at the request of the King himself, who—wanting to have a work written on royal discipline with reference to meditation (*ba-wa-na*)—noted that, though previous writers wrote on discipline of royalty, as they have tended to lack deference to and profundity in the *da-ma'* (P. *dhamma*), these tended to be materialist in orientation, so that following them is like eating curry without salt by which one can never feel contented. Now I have arranged in this work the path of the *da-ma'* which the good king, the Buddha to be ...should practice (Nyei-ya' 1853-66:9-10).

The Tha-tha-na-baing proceeded to explain how King Min"don" practised meditation on paintings of dead bodies, that bad news should always be brought to him before he washed his face while he was still meditating on the inauspicious (*a'min-gala*), i.e. impermanence and suffering, while listening to the bad news of death and disease afflicting his wives and children. After he washed his face he should be told only good (*min-ga-la*) news.

Another contemporary work confirms a newly awakened interest in WM by royalty. Ma-hei-ti, the Right Hand Queen of King Min"don", commissioned a work on WM by Hsa-ya-daw Than-di'ma (1883), called *The mirror of wi'pat-tha-na* (*Wi'pat-tha-na kyei'hmon*) (1883).

However, contemporary WM methods can not be traced back to these monks writing for royalty, but at the furthest to monks such as the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw (1786-1860), the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw³⁴ (1799-1881), the First Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw U" Za-ga-ra' (1822-1893)³⁵ and the Hngat-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw (1831-1910). King Min"don" is known to have

33 Bode (1909:91,93) noted that Nyei-ya' was appointed Tha-tha-na-baing after Thu-ri'ya Wun-tha died. Pyin-nya Tha-mi', who wrote the *Tha-tha-na' wun-tha'*, was the chief pupil of Nyei-ya'. Bode's, Mendelson's and Ferguson's work have largely been guided by his work. On Nyei-ya' see Pyin-nya Tha-mi' (1961: 147,149,152,164). + မှတ်တမ်းများကို ဖော်ပြပါသည်။

34 The Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw is renowned for his rhymes on WM (*wi'pat-tha-na than-bauk*).

35 Hla' Baing (1976:63) noted that 'the beginning of *wi'pat-tha-na* is the lake', so WM began with the work *Gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'* from the Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw, 'after which during the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw period many other works on WM flowed very strongly.' Elsewhere, Hla' Baing (1967:281) interpreted the following rhyme:

When the lake (*in*) was walled a field (*le*) appeared
Upon the emerged field, the bird (*hngat*) descended
When the bird had descended, the cat (*kyaung*) pounced

The lake (*in*) was in reference to the Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw's work *Gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'*, the emerged field referred to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, the bird referred to the Hngat-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw, and the cat to the Kyaung-ban" Hsa-ya-daw.

favoured a nun pupil of the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw, namely Hsa-ya Kin", who 'in 1878 while practising Vipassana ... passed away' (Mi Mi Hkaing 1984:79-80).³⁶

Kings set examples, and establish practices, and there is some evidence to suggest that as a result of his personal interest in meditation, King Min"don" may have stimulated the interest in meditation by the members of his family, the laity, and the monks in his kingdom:

And the inhabitants of the kingdom would fix their mind on liberality, morality, and meditation. And the monks, senior, middle, and junior, headed by the lord of the Order, among their charges, would make themselves responsible for the texts and intuition. (Pyin-nya Tha-mi' 1861:154)

When we come to pre-20th century western sources on Burmese religious life, we find that none—neither Shway Yoe (1882), Bigandet (1880) or Sangermano (1893)—refer to *wi'pat-tha-na* as an activity by itself, let alone any such institutions as might possibly have been associated with its practice at the time.³⁷ It is sometimes difficult to establish whether this was out of ignorance of Burmese thought and Buddhism characterising much early western scholarship; the term *wi'pat-tha-na* is for example rendered in the 1918 revision of Judson's Burmese-English dictionary inadequately as 'a kind of wisdom which enables the possessor to make extraordinary discoveries'. Or, whether WM had in those days a low public profile among the Burmese Buddhists themselves, who had no inclination to emphasise the subject the way this is done today.

References to meditation in Burma by early western authors are marked by two characteristics.

First, the act of meditation is portrayed as if it were practised mainly by monks and the aged; while it is quite clear that nowadays WM has become widespread among the laity and the young also. Bigandet (1880, Pt II:56) wrote that during Lent 'men and women of a certain age have in their hands a string of beads upon which they repeat the formula Aneitsa [*a-neik-sa*'], Duka [*dok-hka*'], Anatta [*a-nat-ta*'], or some other'. Shway Yoe (1882:35) observed that it is practised by 'most of the older members of the kyoung [*kyaung*"]', who

'do, whatever an Englishman would call nothing, all the afternoon. They talk with whatever idlers—and there are always an abundance of them—come about the place, and then sink into meditation and many of the weaker of them into sleep'.

³⁶ See appendix B: Kin", Me.

³⁷ Only Rogers (1870:3-4), in his translation of Buddhagosa's parables, briefly noted the distinction between *gan-bha-dhura*, the 'knowing by heart of the three books of the Pitaka in the Pali language', and *vipassanā-dhura*, 'repeating the Kammathana and the Bhavana'. Otherwise I found little reference to *wi'pat-tha-na* in the pre-20th century Western literature on Burma. Sangermano, Shway Yoe and Bigandet make reference to meditation using the general terms for meditation—*ba-wa-na*, *ka-ma-hian*"—and to the various stages of *zan* and the degrees of enlightenment—*thaw"da-ban*, *tha-ga-da-gun*, *a-na-gun*, and *ya-han"da*. There is also detailed comment on how these fit in with the Buddhist cosmology and notions of rebirth.

The view of meditation as primarily a monastic prerogative is evident from Bigandet (1880 Pt II:43), who concluded that the laity may be faithful and observe the five precepts, but they do not rank among the monks because they do not meditate

'They are real Upasakas [u'pa-tha-ka], or laymen, fervently adhering to and taking refuge in Buddha, the law, and the assembly; but they cannot take rank among the members of the assembly or Thanga [than-ga]. Practice of and progress in meditation can alone usher an Upasaka [u'pa-tha-ka] into the sanctuary of the perfect'.

Second, early western authors appear to have conceived of meditation primarily in terms of a language-bound meditative exercise based on *recitation*, *repetition* and *prayer*. Bigandet (1880 PtI:72) wrote that

'the Burmese reckon forty kamatans [ka-ma-htan"]. They are often repeated over by devotees, whose weak intellect is utterly incapable of understanding the meaning they are designed to convey to the mind'.

Shway Yoe (1882:148,103) referred to meditation as 'repetition of the Bahwanah [ba-wa-na]', and about the more advanced stages in meditation he wrote:

'Thus we reach to the verge of the four immaterial superior heavens. To enter these we must get rid of all affection for matter. The thirty-two parts of the body are often mentioned in prayer by pious Buddhists, each part with its forty-four subdivisions. On these we must ponder till we understand and see the worthlessness of them. Then we must repeat ten thousand times "the firmament, or the aether, is immeasurable," till at length we reach the first Seht or idea of Arupa [a-yu-pa']'.

Elsewhere Bigandet (1880:36) noted with reference to the monks: 'They sit therefore for long hours fingering their rosaries ... and repeating many times the prescribed formulae, most often the Thamatawee Patthanah [tha-ma-hta' wi'pat-tha-na]—All is changeful, all is sad, all is unreal ...'

The same was the case with Sangermano (1893:106,139), who described meditation from a document produced by the *tha-tha-na-baing* in 1783 as follows:

'[it] is practised in pronouncing and meditating upon these three words: Aneizza [a-neik-sa'], Doccha [dok-hka'], Anatta [a-nat-ta'] (Change, pain, illusion). In pronouncing the first, a man is supposed to consider in his mind that he is subject to the misfortunes of life: at the second, that he is obnoxious to its miseries; and at the third, that it is not in his power to free himself from them'.

The references to meditation as a technique of recitation and language are further evident from Rogers (1870). His translation of the parables includes the practice of WM by a monk who is *heard* in the forest by a sow, who then realises the truth of these and is reborn as a Princess and a Brahma. Also, in his translation of the parables of Bok-da'gaw"tha' he translated *wi'pat-tha-na du-ra'* as 'repeating the Kammathana [ka-ma-htan"] and the Bhavana [ba-wa-na]' vs *gan"da'du-ra'*, the 'knowing by heart of the three books of the Pitaka in the Pali language' (Rogers 1880:3-4).

This emphasis on meditation as a linguistic activity remains open to interpretation in two ways. First, it could be interpreted to mean that western observers had not at the time understood the fundamentals of Buddhist meditation, so that they had no opportunity to recognise

meditation even if it did go on. Christian ideas about 'prayer' may have been the only analogies to meditation available to them at the time, which may have affected their interpretation. Second, it could signify a shift in the Burmese conception and explanation of meditation; certainly today's Burmese understanding of meditation is very different from the way it was described by western observers, with the emphasis on its immediate practice bypassing any form of conceptualization. But then, contemporary practice is, as we shall see in Chapter 3, also very different from the descriptions offered by the Burmese works available to us from that period.

The colonial period (until 1948)

Many WM methods practised today are popularly traced back to either of two famous monks who lived during the colonial period—the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1840-1923) and the Min^{gun} Hsa-ya-daw (1868-1955). The Thi^{lon} Hsa-ya-daw and the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw are often included in lineages also, but there is no evidence that they taught WM as a practical technique to the laity.³⁸ The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw and the Min^{gun} Hsa-ya-daw would appear to have developed their methods independently from each other, which is an indication of a degree of spontaneity with which WM teaching arose in different areas of Burma. Their WM methods are generally referred to in short-hand as *a-na-pa-na'* and *tha-di'pa-htan* respectively, and chapter 8 examines two biographies of their lineal descendants teaching these methods. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw established himself in Mon-ywa, Upper Burma, and did not become interested in meditation until the age of 47 in 1887, just as the British were establishing themselves in Upper Burma after the Third Anglo-Burmese War. He began teaching WM to individuals later to become renowned as WM teachers in their own right starting in 1898 with the (Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw U") Ti^{law}"ka'. The Min^{gun} Hsa-ya-daw, on the other hand, established himself mainly in Tha-hton, Lower Burma, after developing his interest in WM in 1905 at the age of 37, about 20 years after the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. While the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw would not appear to have set up meditation centres of his own—he merely taught meditation from his monastery on an individual basis to a number of students who then went on to establish meditation centres in their own name—the Min^{gun} Hsa-ya-daw is known to have had dedicated meditation centres set up in his name. The earliest known WM centre in Burma was thus a Min^{gun} centre founded in Myo'hla' in 1911 on the initiative of some of his lay supporters.³⁹ Many present day WM teachers, though by no means all, claim links with one of these two monks, either through

38 The Thi^{lon} Hsa-ya-daw is renowned for his association with nuns.

39 As described in the biography of the Min^{gun} Hsa-ya-daw (Teik-hka-sa-ra' 1959:74-81), this centre was conceived in 1908 by his faithful pupil (U") San Dun" for 'the dedication towards the practice of WM (*tha-di'pa-htan a-kyin'ta-ya*'). The centre was opened in 1911 (or, as some have it, 1913).

pupillary succession, through reading the books they wrote, and/or geographical proximity of their ordination.

Unlike the newly formed Buddhist associations such as the YMBA and the GCBA, the WM meditation traditions emerging during the colonial period were not implicated in the struggle for national independence. Maung Maung (1980:xiii,108-117) concluded in his *From Sangha to Laity: Nationalist Movements in Burma 1920-1940* that the WM phenomenon was essentially different from politicised Buddhism: he argued that WM became popular during the 1930s as part of a current of disappointment with and retreat from the established Burmese system of political leadership at that time. The first wave of popularity in WM meditation occurred after the major economic depression; between 1927-1930 the price of rice declined and the peasant population, in Lower Burma especially, lost their lands which had been mortgaged to the Indian chettyar. Furthermore, at this time there were the Indo-Burman coolie riots of May 1930 and the unsuccessful Hsa-ya San Peasant Rebellion of 1930-31. During this period:

This disillusionment of the people with their heroes of the 1920s created a deep and lasting distrust of politicians and a distaste for politics... The aspirations and energies of the people became redirected towards the improvement of their individual physical needs and spiritual well-being... Many rich people lavished their wealth upon such centres and on the publication and distribution of serious religious literature for the general good. While in the 1920s almost all national effort was concentrated and directed with single-minded determination in the GCBA nationalist endeavours, in the 1930s people ignored erstwhile leaders, and devoted their energies and wealth in single-minded pursuit of Buddhist sanctity (Maung Maung 1980:109).

Maung Maung not only found that WM was a reaction against current politics, but held what I detected to be a common view in Burma, namely that WM was associated with the building of a new nation state by reforming the individual,

'the spiritual value of such concentration of effort is not easy to evaluate or explain ... it seemed as though the whole nation was going into training in mental health, spiritual strength, and intellectual discipline, ... this period of single-minded Buddhist studies would seem to be one of strengthening the national will for the forthcoming decade-long struggle for Independence' (Maung Maung 1980:113).

Maung Maung commented on two outstanding WM teachers of those days. About (U") Pan-di'da-ma', who later left the monkhood to become (U") Myat Kyaw, he had to say: 'in the early 1930's ... [his] was the most widely known and accepted of the meditation centres exclusively organized and run for the lay public' (Maung Maung 1980:114). The method of U" Pan-di'da-ma' resembled that of the Ma-ha-si, in that both were pupils of the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw who taught the *tha-di'pa-htan* method. U" Pan-di'da-ma' 'set up numerous meditation centres all over Burma and even in Thailand and French Indo-China...in Burma proper, there were twenty-three centres and in the Shan States, seventeen; three were abroad' (Maung Maung 1980:114). The second early famous meditation teacher mentioned by Maung Maung (1980:115-122) was the Mo"hnyn Hsa-ya-daw, pupil of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, with whom in the late 30s 'a crowd of ten-thousand and 500 pongyis [monks] would not be unusual'.

Other WM teachers apart from the ones mentioned above were also operative before national Independence—e.g. Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw, Hsa-ya Thet-gyi", Han-tha-wa-di, Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, etc.—and further details of these may be followed up from the summary biographies of meditation teachers (appendix B).

Early Independence (1948-1962)

Byles (1962:81) characterised the meditation movement in Burma as 'a post-war growth', which:

Although meditation was mainly practised by monks, it was also not unknown to lay people. But the sudden springing up of centres mainly for laymen and laywomen dates only from the Japanese occupation... When the Japanese had withdrawn and Burma achieved self-government, the more thoughtful of the wealthier citizens took stock of the situation and with a sinking heart realized the depths to which they had fallen. The Sangha, to look at one whose members had made them feel 'cool' was not enough. They must learn how to become 'cool' in their own hearts. And so they subscribed the necessary funds and set up meditation centres.'

If during the 30s new forms of nationalism had emerged which, as Maung Maung put it, 'took origin and developed away from the influence of religion and the Buddhist Sangha' the nationalism of the 40s, in the build-up towards national independence, returned to a close association with Buddhism, not unlike that of the indigenous royal era. The Sixth Buddhist Synod (*thin-ga-ya'na*), held between 17 May 1954 and March 1960, and the preparation for it, were the climax of this period (Mendelson 1975:277). In this context WM practice received great impetus, and became truly popular with Burmese laity and monks alike.

During this period WM practice came to be seen as part of an integrated solution of setting up an independent nation state. A number of western political scientists and anthropologists have speculated as to how WM fitted into the socio-political context of what became known as the Religious Revival. Mendelson (1975:263) wrote:

The Revival, as the term will be used here, represents the government-promoted plans and official acts to give new life to Buddhism in Burma. The range of efforts to accomplish such a goal included state support of Buddhist education, attempts at improving Sangha discipline and unity, Buddhist social service projects, encouragement of meditation for monks and laity, dreams of a state religion, and, most importantly, plans for a Sixth Buddhist Council to recapture and revitalize the accomplishments and glory of Mindon's efforts in that regard.

Certainly the Revival is vital to an understanding of Sangha-state relations in independent Burma under U Nu. To see its rise and fall as a politico-religious phenomenon, it is necessary to grasp that the Revival was first and foremost a program, that it had a beginning and an end, however many repercussions it may still have in the personal religious life of many Burmese. It coincided broadly with the major part of the career of U Nu as prime minister of Burma and as an international figure of some standing from 1947 on, and it ended with his fall from power at the hands of the army regime in 1958. From the ideological point of view it can be seen as the moral aspect of Pyidawtha, U Nu's vision of the ideal state in which people and government live in happy cooperation. Because of the extent to which Nu and his followers used the Revival in their speeches, their tours of the country, and their electoral programs, it became, in effect, a religious model of the state itself. From the point of view of practical politics, it was the essential contribution of the Nu wing of the AFPFL to the Burmese scene, while Nu's opponents, led by Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein, concerned themselves with the more practical materialistic side of socialism. Thus, as the Revival programs developed, they became subjects of debate between the opposing factions of the AFPFL, and the Revival itself became one of the major causes of the AFPFL split.'

A number of factors enhanced the popularity of WM in the Revival. Government officials, having claimed an interest in WM, promoted it. The interest by Prime Minister (U") Nu' is well-known, an interest referred to in his biography (U Nu 1975:195,198-9). It was in 1950, just after the most serious threat to the country was momentarily averted that (U") Nu' entered the meditation centre. Soon after the Karens had captured Mandalay (March), and were preparing to capture Rangoon in January 1949:

the situation eased sufficiently to enable the government to breathe freely. Cabinet members meeting in early June heard the prime minister announce: "My friends, I go to the Meditation Centre tomorrow. I have a vow to keep to attain the *thin-khar-ru-pek-kha nyan* [*thin-hka-yo'pek-hka nyan*]. Until then do not send for me, even if the whole country is enveloped in flames. If there are fires, you must put them out yourselves". Fortunately, however, during the period of Thakin Nu's meditation no situation that could be called alarming arose in any part of the country. Thakin Nu fulfilled his vow on 20 July.⁴⁰

King Min"don", the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, and (U") Nu' all faced the problem of keeping a kingdom state and its Buddhism together; is it a coincidence that they were partial to meditation on impermanence?

Many other important civil servants are known to have taken a personal interest in WM. The Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe'gyok (BTNA), an organisation which today has approximately one-third of the country's meditation centres under its wing, was founded by (U") Nu' (later to become Prime Minister) and a number of other powerful politicians and businessmen on 13 November 1947. The BTNA head quarters were soon built, serving at the same time as a meditation centre, where the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, a pupil of the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw, was placed as a teacher. This organisation did a great deal more than propagating meditation: it promoted activities central to the Revival and the Sangayana; it promoted the Burma Hill Tracts Buddhist Mission, seeking to 'bring about unity and co-operation between the peoples of the Plains and the People of the Hills'; and it fathered the Government Naing-ngan-daw Bok-da'ba-tha Tha-tha-na A-hpwe' (NBTA) set up in 1950, the leadership of which was with minor modifications, the same as that of the BTNA (Mendelson 1975:267,271). In the official history of the BTNA, it is said about the establishment of the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha (the Ma-ha-si meditation centre) that,

'With the reconquest and new unification of Burma ... 1) the leaders of the country, excellent in the *tha-tha-na-daw*, accepted willingly the posts of president and prime minister; 2) in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister an association was set up of which the president, the Prime Minister and the country's ministers were members together with the rich man (Sir U") Thwin, and apparent became this great Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha [the main Ma-ha-si meditation centre], bastion of international missionary work and *tha-tha-na* science, such as had never before appeared in Burmese royal history' (BTNA 1958:hka').

40 The autobiography is written by (U") Nu' about himself in the third person.

WM was also introduced into the syllabus of the Sangha University set up by the Institute for Advanced Studies which opened in 1955, the aim of which was 'to practice meditation at suitable centres and in turn to disseminate teaching based on vipassana' (Mendelson 1975:303).

Some powerful government officials soon made WM teaching their personal mission. (U") Ba' Hkin, Accountant-General of Burma, initially associated with the BTNA, then set up the Vipassana Research Association in 1951, and the Accountant General Vipassana Association was set up on 24 April 1952. From the latter emerged the International Meditation Centre, Rangoon, and numerous other centres abroad. Such personal commitment to WM on the part of high government officials significantly furthered WM's popularity and resulted in well endowed institutions still existing today.

In addition to the personal commitment of government officials, Government itself became officially involved with WM for a period. Not only did Government initiate a programme of subsidy to all WM centres (see below), but it also gave unpaid leave to workers in the civil service to meditate. Also in 1957 WM was introduced into Burma's prisons, when 'prisoners from 22 jails have expressed their desire to practise vipassana-bhavana on their holidays' (BNTA 1958:9).

It would seem that WM even became a precondition of promotion. This is suggested by an incident recorded by Brohm (1957:350).⁴¹ Also, the teaching by Accountant General (U") Ba' Hkin of his office employees in a special room in his office could be interpreted as a government

When Buddhist
Sangha involved

41 Brohm (1957:351) said

'How this situation (of meditation hierarchy) can act to restructure a hypothetical new society was graphically revealed to the writer in the course of a meditation experience... In this case, two newly appointed Junior Public Affairs Officers were observed to engage in the strenuous yogic breathing exercises for a prolonged period of time—about two hours. Their efforts had apparently brought them into a trance-like "samadhi" (*tha-ma-di*) in which they were oblivious to everything in the external world with the exception of the voice of the meditation-master. Under his direction... they were allowed to emerge from their trance-like state. Once recovered, they faced their honored preceptor as well as other monks and high-ranking laymen present (including an ex-Cabinet Minister and a secretary to the Prime Minister). They were queried as to the nature of their experience while in meditation. They spoke of an initial tension in the region of the pit of the stomach... All of these descriptions were carefully guided, elicited or even suggested by one of the high-ranking laymen present, and for those belonging to this meditational group these were highly predictable reactions to anticipate... Nonetheless it was promptly concluded that the young men had taken the great step. They had now realized a significant measure of vipassana and had "entered the stream." They were changed men for whom there could no longer be any possibility of backsliding from the teachings of the Buddha—and they were therefore eminently equipped to face their new responsibilities as members of a dedicated bureaucracy! (emphasis Brohm's).'

initiative since little choice was left for his employees but to meditate. Finally, it is suggested by a story about the first president of Burma.⁴²

The increased demand on the part of the unordained evidently stimulated some of the monastic sects, in particular the Shwei-gyin, to provide teaching facilities. Than Tun (n.d.:27), in his history of the Shwei-gyin sect, translated its proceedings since 1920. He made no reference to WM until the proceedings of the IXth All Shweigyin Nikaya [Shwei-gyin Ni'ke] Convention, held 18-20 February 1957, where it was resolved 'that lessons on Vipassana—insight, should be written and published'.

WM also became one of Burma's important exports abroad. The Ma-ha-si and his pupils taught all over the world.⁴³

Tinker described the increased interest in meditation in passing,⁴⁴ but it was the American anthropologist Brohm (1957:340-52, 416-18) who first paid more than cursory attention to WM.⁴⁵ Brohm's PhD thesis, entitled *Burmese religion and the Burmese religious revival*, aimed to provide 'some background ... for more intelligent insights into and assessments of the present phenomenon of religio-political "revival" in Burma' (Brohm 1957:3). He (1957:341-42,347) held that meditation was the main feature of this religious revival,⁴⁶

'... in modern times—and chiefly in urban surroundings—there has occurred what might be called a meditational "revolution" in that this activity has assumed mass proportions among the more heavily acculturated laity, and to a large extent among the monkhood as well... meditational

42 I was told a story by a meditation teacher concerning the first president of Burma. Supposedly he was an alcoholic and was so drunk at the time of the first official state banquet that he had to be fetched from his home supported by several ministers. He was too late for the banquet and vomited when the third course was served. After the banquet he was so ashamed of himself that he offered his resignation, which was, however, not accepted by his cabinet colleagues. Instead he was brought into contact with a meditation centre, took a ten day course, and was rid of all his alcoholic habits.

43 Mendelson (1975:308) also referred to the Ma-ha-si method being taught by a Burmese monk in Thailand.

44 See end-notes, 'Tinker'.

45 For background on Brohm, see end-note 'Brohm'.

46 Brohm (1957:444) noted four 'forms of behavior' that 'are symbolically expressive of that revival' in order of importance: 1. participation in vipassana meditation; 2. engaging in meritorious activities (i.e. charity); 3. reverently regarding the Sangha; 4. conforming to moral code of practice.

groups practising *vipassana* exercises have mushroomed enormously in number since independence, particularly in urban surroundings'.

Brohm was also the first to name particular teachers and their methods.⁴⁷

Some subsequent scholars saw a contradiction in government officials emphasising both meditation and occult practices. Smith (1965:166) took issue with Brohm and Tinker about the role of WM in the Revival and, perceiving a contradiction in rationale between the Government's emphasis on meditation and their apparent interest in spirit worship, doubted that the Government really did put *wi'pat-tha-na* first,

'Two Western observers of the Burmese religious scene have claimed to see a distinctive emphasis in the course of Buddhist revival since independence. According to Hugh Tinker, the "supreme emphasis" placed on meditation and the scriptures may presage the attainment of a higher plane of Burmese Buddhism. John F. Brohm regarded *vipassana* meditation as "the outstanding symbol of the modern urban Burmese religion and the ultimate religious revival". To the extent that these writers had in mind the private organizations which have spontaneously fostered the practice of meditation this may be true. But if one considers the religious activities of the government, which were by far the most prominent aspects of the revival, it is very doubtful that any clear emphasis could be discerned. The superstitions and animistic practices of popular Burmese religion were sanctified and encouraged by the government with as much enthusiasm as the establishment of meditation centres. The government was very clear in its intentions although unsuccessful in its efforts, to reform the Sangha; but in other areas of Buddhist doctrine and practice, the main effort was to revivify and strengthen long-established religious traditions, not to effect reforms'.

Smith (1965:167) proceeded to argue that government officials 'assumed an almost indispensable role in the opening ceremonies of practically all religious festivals', and that 'official participation in religious ceremonies generally strengthened traditional conceptions of rather mechanical merit-making'. By this he meant, for example, the veneration of relics rather than the practice of meditation, which 'must surely be regarded as one of the non-rational elements in traditional Buddhism'. Finally, Smith shed doubt on Government priorities in respect of meditation, by

1.
i.e. med. =
'rational'

47 Brohm sketched the involvement of the Buddha Sasana Council [BNTA] in WM as follows:

'There are other ways, of course, in which the Union Buddha Sasana Council has followed and even taken the lead in attempting to further the "practice of Buddhism," as outlined in step number three of U Win's inaugural address in August of 1951. It has, for example, sponsored the visits of sympathetic non-Buddhists to approved meditation centres so that they might realize for themselves the "truths" and the derived personal benefits of Buddhism as they are attainable under modern *vipassana* meditational techniques. This is a continuing program for implementing the spread of true Buddhist "enlightenment." U Nu, for example, in his recent world tour, called earnestly for seekers of the truth to visit Burma and there find what they are searching for. In a speech delivered at New York University on July 6, 1955, he said:

'I know full well that Americans can only be convinced by "scientific proof," that is, by practical experiment and practical demonstration...I would like to make a suggestion in regard to this practical experimentation with the truth of Buddhist doctrine. I suggest that ten persons, chosen and selected by a competent body, should come to Burma for the purpose of personally putting the doctrine to proof by actual practice of the spiritual exercises...after they have practised the required course of spiritual exercises and they will relate to the American people their experiences and their findings.'

The "spiritual exercises" which Nu referred to were without question the *vipassana* meditations conducted at such centres as the Sasana yeiktha [Tha-ha-na Yeik-tha] under the direction of pongyis [hpon "gyi"] and meditation-masters like the Mahasi Sayadaw... many other visitors to Burma, Westerners and Asians alike, have been hospitably received and their stay in Burma "meritoriously" subscribed so that they might have the opportunity to "practice Buddhism". That this is so only underscores further the importance to be attached to this special type of meditation as the outstanding symbol of modern urban Burmese religion and the ultimate hall mark of the religious revival.' (Brohm 1957:416-7).

writing that 'U Nu's references to the "scientific approach" of Buddhism, or to the importance of meditation, must always be considered in the light of this fact [i.e. the continued participation in traditional versus modern Buddhist activities]' (1965:169).⁴⁸

Smith (1965:157) concluded that there was a 'strengthening of emphasis' on WM by the NBTA rather than a primary government emphasis as such,

'The Buddha Sasana Council [NBTA] has strengthened the emphasis on meditation in modern Theravada Buddhism. Various vipassana (meditation) groups provide for their members expert instruction in the techniques of "insight" meditation, as a means of hastening progress toward the goal of nibbana. One such private organization, the Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Association [BTNA], is engaged in building a network of meditation centres throughout the country, a project subsidized by the council. At the Sasana Yeiktha [Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha] retreat center monks are trained to take charge of meditation centres elsewhere'.

Mendelson's (1975:314) premise was more along the lines of Brohm's than Smith's, in that he observed that 'the actual practice of Buddhism for the sophisticated urbanites involved in the Revival meant mainly the practice of meditation'. But Mendelson (1975:315) was not quite sure whether government initiated or merely followed a trend: '... one has to wonder if the government really initiated and developed it or merely joined and then attempted to control an already popular movement'.

Mendelson held government to be muscling in on a meditation movement which was already popular. The BTNA, the largest of the private organisations fostering WM, was set up in November 1947 in Rangoon, well before official government machinery was set in motion with the NBTA which made government religious policy in Burma. The BTNA made propagation of WM a primary objective, and its headquarters was the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha, which also served as a meditation centre. The governmental organisation of the NBTA, on the other hand, was founded no less than three years later in 1950, and it made use of the BTNA headquarters until completion of the Ka-ba Ei" Pagoda in the mid 1950s. According to Mendelson, then, government activity in the field of Buddhism took place in the climate of the objectives of non-governmental organisations such as the BTNA with its emphasis on WM, and he sought 'to show how the BTNA fathered it and other key programs that were to become central to the Nu Revival' (1975:268).⁴⁹

Mendelson concluded that WM was exploited by the Nu government in order to exercise indirect influence over the many private Buddhist societies which had already appeared, and from which it hoped to derive some general legitimacy. Apart from the BTNA there were by the time of National Independence already a good number of other significant private foundations

48 'U Nu spoke of buddhist meditation as an "exact science," the object of which was to escape from the burden-someness of the world.' (Smith 1965:184).

49 Mendelson (1975:315) at some point actually referred to the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha Centre as 'the BSC [BNTA] Thathana Yeiktha Center'.

concerned with propagating meditation, such as the centres teaching Mo'hnyin Hsa-ya-daw's methods in Mon-ywa, the Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw's methods, and the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw's methods. The subsidy programme for meditation centres initiated by Government through the BNTA was in Mendelson's opinion an instrument of control. The BNTA used a fourfold class division of meditation centres, depending on their size of student intake: if these were high they would receive larger amounts of subsidy depending on whether they could satisfactorily complete a questionnaire about their activities.

'The documents available suggest that the queries made by the BSC [BNTA] before recognizing and subsidizing centres aroused some opposition because of the opinion that meditation above all was a field in which control by one organization, however well meaning, was undesirable'.

This subsidy programme was not without opposition. Only 45 out of the 121 centres returned the questionnaire, and so Mendelson took the view that the government subsidy scheme of meditation centres nation wide was a failure: 'the government was less than successful in using the carrot and stick approach to that part of the Sangha and the lay Buddhist world which had developed meditation groups'. While there was nothing peculiar about the nature of the survey, 'it is doubtful whether instruments such as questionnaires...would serve the ends for which they were designed'. Mendelson (1975:316) proceeded to point out that the whole question 'leads us directly into the politics of meditation and Revivalism' for the reason that,

'Foreign visitors to Burma intent on glimpsing the process of meditation soon realized that the BSC [BNTA]'s official center, the Thathana Yeiktha, in Kokine Road, was not also the most logical place to stay but also that to which much advice naturally led (them). The Mahasi Sayadaw was a most powerful figure ... It follows that this teacher, in charge of his own much-favored center, with branches scattered throughout the country and even in Ceylon, may have had some say in the recognition of other centres, depending on whether or not he approved of their system of teaching. In the 1956 and 1958 BSC [BNTA] reports, "training in Rangoon" is made part of the qualifications for grant support, and such preparation would most likely take place at the Mahasi Sayadaw's institution'.

In this manner Mendelson focused on the close link between the government ministerial BNTA machinery and the NGO BTNA, and found WM, along with other activities,⁵⁰ to be the locus of this link. In fact, Mendelson (1975:278) referred to the buildings built by the BTNA in co-ordination with the BNTA as 'government pagodas and monasteries'. He aptly noted how the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha also served as the place where the first two founders' meetings of the BNTA took place in 1950⁵¹ of which the results were presented to mostly pro-government Ovadacariya or Vinayadhara judges. Finally, Mendelson (1975: 317) concluded that, 'the government (i.e. the BSC [BNTA]) can be seen as alert to identify and, under the guise of support,

50 Other activities included missionizing Buddhism in the Hill Tracts and the practice of social service, see pp. 306-314.

51 Mendelson 1975:268; *Light of the Dhamma* 1/1, 1952:30-4.

to control, in its self-appointed role as thathanabaing (*tha-tha-na-baing*), any potential schisms or sectarian movements within the Sangha'.

In other words, Mendelson developed the idea that the Government stress on meditation was part of the larger issue of reestablishing control over the Sangha, which had become difficult with the loss of a strong king and a primate. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, installed in the BTNA Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha, is described in his biography as the lineal descendant, in respect of both meditation tradition and conventional ordination, of the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw, who was unsuccessfully wooed by King Min"don" in his efforts to incorporate the forest tradition within his orbit of authority.

Late Independence (post 1962)

Though meditation centres are still frequented by many important government officials, the public policy of post-1962 military Government is no longer to put Buddhism or the meditation centre in the forefront of government policy. This is so partly for reasons of political and economic stability. Politically, Buddhism had become a very sensitive issue after the attempt by (U") Nu' to make it the national religion. Any preferential treatment of Buddhism has since been covert, consisting mainly of personal patronage by government officers rather than official policy. Unlike the (U") Nu' government, the military regime hardly made Buddhism a priority, let alone WM.

This is not to say that Burma's post-1962 government did not concern itself with Buddhism. The period after 1980, in particular, saw a great deal of government activity in Buddhism. In the 1980s the 'Congregation of All Orders To Promote The Purification, Perpetuation, And Propagation' was held on 24-27 May 1980. Monastic courts were held which pronounced judgments in a variety of cases, such as Shin Okkattha's views expounded in *lu-thei lu-hpyit* which was found to be 'materialistic and against the teaching of the Pali Canonical texts' (24-29 Oct 1981); against Kyauk-thin-baw in the A'da-ma' case⁵²; etc. It defrocked monks not adhering to the monastic code of conduct (*wi'ni*), and in particular: it sought to curb display of supernatural powers (such as the Thein-byu Hsa-ya-daw and (U") La'ra'ma'wun-theik-di), and to make judgments against monks involved in sex scandals. It recognised only nine sects, and encouraged their merger. As part of this programme, it printed literature on Buddhism. For example, in May 1981 it relaunched the Buddhist journal *Light of the Dhamma*, which had been allowed to lapse since 1963. Also, it built a pagoda, awarded religious titles, and initiated many

official Buddhist ceremonies. Many of these activities took place under the Ministry of Home and Religious Affairs and were noticeable while I was doing fieldwork.

Some Burmese Buddhists have suggested that this change in policy towards Buddhism was also for personal reasons: Nei Win, the President under the military regime until the 80s, and Chairman of the Burma Socialist Party after that, expressed little desire for WM. But with age mellowing him, some thought his new interest in Buddhism in the 80s to be genuine. Military government's policy was initially one of 'bright and skilful first [secular education], good and holy second [Buddhist morality and meditation]' (*lu-daw lu-kaung*) but in the 1980s it became reversed as 'good and holy first, bright and skilful second'. This was supposed to be under the influence of a speech by Nei Win. Also, according to a speech in the 1980s by General San Yu, Government was thought to support the view that 'Tight stomach first, then observe morality' (*u ma-taung'hma' thi-la'saung'me*), which had in the 1980s become 'Only after observing morality will the stomach be tight'. So the military Government began to pay at least lip service to Buddhist morality as a positive qualification for Burmese citizens.

Whichever government was in power, WM continued to grow unabated even during the 1960s. The Nei Win Government, aware of this, and seeking to both avoid mismanagement of funds and to gain the benefit of finance for government projects, obliged meditation centres to put their liquid assets in government banks. This measure was part of a larger package designed to establish some control over all autonomous religious organizations, including the monkhood. The assets handled by the BTNA, the central board of trustees of the Ma-ha-si central office, is estimated in buildings alone at 15 million kyats (at 13K to the pound this was over 1 million UK pounds); this is more than, for example, the national capital expenditure on education for the year 1977/78. Alternatively, it represents over 2% of the total agricultural credit extended by the government for rice growing nationally in 1981.⁵³ The capital, together with the liquid assets commanded by the Ma-ha-si centres in 1981, was equivalent to roughly .5 percent of the total output value of the Burmese agricultural sector for the year 81/82. These amounts represent, of course, money involved in the central office and the central meditation centre of just the Ma-ha-si, which can only be a fraction of expenditure on Ma-ha-si centres nation-wide, and in turn a fraction of all WM centres nationally. Nor do these figures take into account the religious expenditure *yaw"gi* might make elsewhere, for such purposes as the upkeep of monasteries, pagodas, and regular offerings to monks outside Ma-ha-si centres. So these figures may be safely multiplied by a considerable factor to cover expenditure on the country's meditation centres, and

53 Statistics derived on the basis of comparison between Ma-ha-si Yearbook (BTNA 1981:122) and the *Report to the Pyithu Hluttaw* (1982).

by another factor to cover religious expenditure by regular yogis. WM, expressed in western economic terms, has grown into one of Burma's key national service industries.

2

How a foreigner invented 'Buddhendom' in Burmese: from *tha-tha-na* to *bok-da'ba-tha*

- (i) The WM *yaw"gi* actively discriminates between different types of knowledge; between perception based knowledge created by man (*thin-nya*), and true sacred intuitive wisdom based on the knowledge of cause and effect as they truly are (*pyin-nya*) and as intended by the Buddha. The first is associated with nomenclature (*pyin-nyat*), 'conventional truth' (*tha-mok-ti' thit-sa*), and 'worldly knowledge' (*law"ki pyin-nya*); the second is associated with 'ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-ha' thit-sa*) and 'otherworldly knowledge' (*law"kot-ta-ra pyin-nya*). This knowledge distinction may be summed up in terms of the discrimination some practice-exponents have made between 'mistaken Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) as parentally received religious practice mixed up with customary, inherited or second-hand knowledge including ideas about astrology, spirit worship, science, vocational knowledge, and various foreign religions vs. 'true Buddhism' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*) as reconstructed from a limited set of ancient scriptures and as experienced in meditation.

It is thought that the concept 'Christianity' (*Christianismos*) appeared some time after it was confessed as a religion. The concept does not appear in the New Testament writings and it was not until the times of Christian thinkers of the late first and early second centuries that it was first used. The earliest known reference was by Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch (died c. AD 110), in his *Letter to the Magnesians* as a Christian parallel to the concept of "Judaism" (*Ioudaïsmos*). The concept *Ioudaïsmos* had been first used by the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Galatians, chapter 1, verse 13, to characterize the Jewish way of faith and life, and the term Christianity is therefore 'a rather late Christian neologism used to contrast the beliefs and way of life of Christians with that of both Jews of the synagogue and sectarian Jewish Christians (i.e., Christians who wanted to retain the Mosaic Law)' (Benz 1980:460).

Use of concepts such as 'Christianity' implies a degree of selfconsciousness that it is but one possible faith among competing '-isms'. During my stay in Burma, I encountered several Burmese who argued that prior to colonisation there was no equivalent Burmese term for 'Buddhism' to our term 'Christianity', and that it was the Baptist American missionary Judson who was responsible for the introduction of the now popularly used term 'Buddha language/culture' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) into the Burmese language. I have not been able to substantiate

whether this is true—indeed, I doubt that one person could be held responsible for engineering a language and for ensuring that it should gain such popular acceptance. But the fact remains that we are here less concerned with historical fact than with Burmese constructions of Buddhism in their own language. Certainly, it is beyond doubt that over the last century a new term has come to be commonly used by the Burmese themselves in reference to Buddhism. In this chapter I will briefly describe the significance of this new terminology, which has not hitherto been described either in Burmese dictionaries or in the western literature on Burmese Buddhism. But before doing so, something needs to be said about the impact of the foreigner on Buddhism in Burma.

The foreigner

Burma has been in contact with the West since at least the 15th Century; adventurers, missionaries, traders, foreign navy personnel, colonial civil servants, and tourists have all had their impact. This was predated, of course, by contact with the peoples populating present day China, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. But Burmese Buddhist traditions were challenged in a unique manner by the British conquest of Burma which began in 1824 with the annexation of Lower Burma and was completed with the annexation of the rest of the country by 1886, during which the nineteenth century missionaries and colonial civil servants exercised considerable influence on Burmese life.

Buddhism depends on recruitment to the monastic order through ordination, where the tasks of scriptural learning and meditation are practised under a strict moral regime, thus ensuring the historical continuity of Buddhist knowledge. But monasticism depends on the laity and government,¹ and government is dependent on the support of the subjects of the country. Conquest by a non-Buddhist people altered this delicate relationship of mutual interdependence.

In a speech in 1951 at Rangoon University on the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the Buddha Sasana Council [BNTA], Minister of Religion (U") Win² summarised the changes Buddhism underwent in the course of the colonial period, after having been 'extensively attacked by Christian missionaries and colonial civil servants of another system':

When we were denied freedom, what was the state of our Religion? Sanghas split up into different sects; contact between the Sanghas and laymen were few and far between; there was a dearth of learned men; religious practice was neglected and darkness gradually fell on our Sasana (religion)... While in the past every Buddhist child got his rudiments of Buddhist religious education thanks to our wonderful monastic schools, our children were gradually kept away from

1 In Burma there was a system of tax relief for parents of novitiate, and a system of rewards for the relatives of the ordained. Contrast this with the restrictions upon ordination and dissemination of Buddhist knowledge in occupied Cambodia and Tibet, where the transmission of Buddhism suffered under an alien government.

2 (U") Win was Minister for Defence, Home and Religious Affairs between 1950-1952 (People's Literature 1961).

them during the alien regime. Thus an everwidening gulf crept in between the Sanghas and the laymen; the old Sangha organization lost its former cohesion and the Sangha eventually came under the aegis of lay courts of law. With this decline in the structure of Sangha society came the deterioration in the Sangha's code of conduct. Lay morality also declined in consequence. With this general deterioration in human morality, breaches of law became rampant. In fact the present insurrection in our country is attributable to this decline in human morality... Those good-intentioned people carried on this noble work (of building, feeding monks, examining scriptures) for over 60 years without the material support of the then Government. They were the real Promoters of the Faith in the absence of the Faithful Ruler. Now the circumstances have changed. Independence is once more restored and the Government is duly elected by the people according to the constitution. It is but inevitable that the Government becomes the Promotor of The Faith on behalf of the people who elect it. The Government thus elected cannot merely look on indifferently at the religious structure which had been disintegrating during the last sixty years' (Mendelson 1975:270).³

This retrospective look at the colonial era by a member of the first generation of Burmese post-Independence officials posits a discontinuity in the customary mode of transmission and support of Buddhism. The order of change is important. Deterioration in Buddhism started with the conquest by a foreign government uninterested in religion, which resulted in a concomitant decline in (colonial) government support for Buddhism. This was followed by the destruction of monastic unity through sectarian fission, and the deterioration of its moral standards. The introduction of secular education supplanted the monastic educational system, and contact between the monastic order and laity became much less intensive, so that the laity also lost their moral standards, and political unrest, such as guerilla activities and communism ensued which make for unstable government.

In this way, decline in government morality and charity is perceived to lead to decline in monastic morality and knowledge, which in turn lead to decline in lay morality and charity, which in turn made for unstable government and bad Buddhist observance for all; neglect of Buddhism leads to political instability. The Burmese National Independence Government of 1948 aimed—by encouraging scriptural learning and meditation, by practising charity and by raising the standard of morality—to break out of this vicious circle. This was the underlying motivation of government support of Buddhism during early independence as I see it (i.e. my interpretation is somewhat different from Mendelson's argument that government was 'out for votes'.) WM was one of the activities supported and integrated with recruitment to government in order to achieve these aims because it would reestablish monastic/lay morality and therefore government.

3 Mendelson is here quoting a passage from: *Burma Weekly Bulletin*, 137 (Oct. 1, 1950:3-4). The same passage is found in: *Light of Dhamma* vol.1, no.1, Nov.1952:31-32.

The printing press

With the foreigner came the printing press. During the first 500 years BC, Buddhist knowledge was transmitted orally in monasteries from generation to generation: monk and Buddhist knowledge were almost synonymous. After 500 years it was then externally represented in the form of written texts, which came to embody and represent Buddhist knowledge in its most enduring form over the next 2,000 years until the present. The texts became independent of the painstaking transmission word by word from a teacher's to a pupil's memory. The skills necessary for reading and interpreting the scriptures brought in their train the tradition of 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*), with monks specialising in these skills. But as Buddhist scriptures were for a long time circulated in limited numbers of hand-inscribed palm-leaf manuscripts, rote learning remained crucial, and there was much emphasis on methods of rhyme, rhythm and various mnemonics to remember large chunks of text. It was not until the introduction of the printing press in Burma in 1817 by missionaries⁴ that large-scale circulation of printed Buddhist literature became possible in Burma. Through its printed textual representation, Buddhist knowledge came increasingly to endure alongside of, and independent from, the collective memory of the monastic lineages. Monks no longer had to reteach anew every generation every syllable of the scriptures by heart. Scriptural learning today is no longer what it used to be; there is now emphasis on understanding and logic, particularly in modern scriptural learning exams.

To this change must be added a more recent development, namely the vernacularisation of Buddhism. After the Sixth Synod [Than-ga-ya'na], held in Rangoon 1952-56, the scriptures were translated into and printed in vernacular Burmese. Also, a unique feature of this Synod was the recitation of the scriptures in a language which hitherto had not been included, namely English.⁵ Representation of Buddhist knowledge has, alongside its representation in mass circulated text, thereby also come to be printed in different languages.

These developments had important consequences. First, printed Burmese and English translations of texts have granted the unordained direct access to the scriptures. No longer

⁴ Hla Pe (Burmese Literature, Draft for submission to *Litteratura d'Oriente*. Typescript, n.d., p32) wrote that the Christian presses established in Rangoon since 1817 printed 'only evangelizing and educational material in Burmese, none of which appears to have had any appreciable effect on the language or literature of Burma at this stage'. It was not until 1871 that the first three Burmese newspapers appeared.

⁵ At present an alternative English translation of the *Pi'ta-ka* to the Pali Text Society's is being prepared in Burma by ex Prime Minister (U") Nu'.

having to rely on the preaching of monks, laymen have become more confident and capable of playing a role in Buddhism. During the colonial era many educated Burmese Buddhists were stimulated particularly by English texts to come to grips with their Buddhist heritage.⁶ Of course, monks continue to be widely perceived as the most capable expounders of Buddhist knowledge on the basis of their specialist knowledge of the scriptures and Pali and their observance of complex rules of morality,⁷ but there is no longer a monastic monopoly on learning. Second, these developments have also given both monk and laity the time and opportunity to devote themselves towards the exercise and realisation of the spirit of the Buddha's teachings instead of committing its letters out of motivation to preserve in fear of its loss. In other words, these developments may be observed as supporting the current popularity of Buddhist practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*).

Inherited versus discovered knowledge

Now I will briefly look at two fundamentally different kinds of attitudes which Burmese Buddhists have evolved to these developments. The monk Wi'thu'da (1982) observed the lapse of a variety of customary Buddhist practices, which greatly worried him. He expressed particular concern about the modern tendency to forget what the novitiation ceremony used to be about; today it lacks the lustre it enjoyed before. His fear prompted him to characterise the present century as a 'museum period':

The Twentieth Century is already a museum period, a museum at the end of the road of tradition, custom, demeanour, and culture. Traditional customs, demeanour and culture have been discontinued, and, having arrived at a moment in time where they are no longer observed, they are about to be encamped in a museum. (Wi'thu'da 1982:4)

Ko Lei" (1980:555-56), the biographer of the meditation teacher (U") Ba' Hkin, on the other hand, had a very different view of contemporary Buddhist tradition; he saw this century as a 'purity period' uniquely suited to meditational practice.

In the present purity period, path and fruition of the Buddha's Laws (*ta-ya"*) can be achieved: it is a period of meditation in which, like the time when the Buddha became enlightened, by applying oneself to the three disciplines of morality, concentration and wisdom, the happiness of the path and the attainment of fruition may be had. It is a period of meditation, a WM period...now that it is the purity period, if we work according to the preaching of the Buddha, the morality the Buddha liked, the concentration the Buddha liked, the wisdom the Buddha liked, then there is no reason whatsoever for not being equipped to achieve the happiness of the path and fruition of the *ta-ya"*...'

6 For example, Ko Lei" (1980), Vice-Chancellor of Mandalay University, recounted how he began to take an interest in Buddhism when introduced to it by interested foreigners.

7 KN pointed out that it is very difficult for a layman who cannot devote the whole of his life to develop the delicate knowledge of Buddhism the way a monk can. For example, the layman (U") Shwei-zan Aung who wrote a lot on Buddhism could only point out principles, but he had difficulties in interpreting and in working out detailed implications of these. For this reason much of his work was wrong.

The above two passages exemplify radically different attitudes of contemporary Burmese Buddhists to their inherited Buddhist tradition. How are they different? First, underlying the two passages are different motivations for description. Wi'thu'da was motivated to reestablish old practice, whereas (U") Ko Lei" was motivated to record modern practice so as to extend, inform and strengthen currently waxing interests in ancient practice of WM. Second, the two passages portray two radically different views of Buddhist history: Shin Wi'thu'da posited a linear non-repetitive development of history where traditions and customs, once lost, do not tend to come back, whereas the reference by (U") Ko Lei" referred to the WM period as part of a historical cycle in terms of the two times 500 year cycle view considered in chapter 3, where the 'purity period' beginning mid-20th century is a repetition of the period at the Buddha's time. Third, the two passages evoke different moods about contemporary Buddhism; Wi'thu'da's mourning over the loss of Buddhist customs from the immediate past, evokes a pessimistic mood, whereas (U") Ko Lei" in his evident rejoicing at the gain of a long-hidden meditational practice in the twentieth century, evokes a spirit of optimism about the future of Buddhism. Fourth, while Wi'thu'da described Buddhism mediately in terms of culture and ritual, Ko Lei" described Buddhism immediately in terms of individual realisation of practice.

Fifth, and finally, implicit in the above paragraphs is an important difference in opinion about the places of monks and the unordained in Buddhist tradition. Changes in the educational system during the colonial period had changed their roles. Wi'thu'da, a monk, viewed customary Burmese Buddhist ceremonial performed by the laity in relation to the monastic order as indispensable to Buddhist tradition, and harked back to the time when the monastery (and ordination into it) was the central focus for lay Buddhist practice, and where the novitiation ceremony was widely considered central to the perpetuation of Burmese Buddhism. Ko Lei" on the other hand, being a layman, concluded that, though Buddhist tradition used to be about laity rallying around the monastery, in modern times it is about the re-creation of Buddhist knowledge for each individual him/herself, whether monk or laymen, by means of WM. Ko Lei" was excited about the options open to laymen in this century, who he thought were able to absorb Buddhist knowledge and could take salvational action by themselves; they were no longer solely reliant on the institution of the monastery for Buddhist practice. Conventional monasticism, however important still, was pushed off the stage-centre of lay Buddhism, and WM (by unordained and ordained alike) took its place.

We will examine Wi'thu'da's book on novitiation ceremony and the book by Ko Lei" on (U") Ba' Hkin more closely in chapters 4 and 7 respectively. We must now develop this sense of knowledge discrimination and consider the role of the foreigner in the development of Burmese Buddhism.

'Buddhism' created by the foreigner

What categories have Burmese Buddhists evolved to make sense of this new order pertaining today?

The Burmese language has for many centuries included two Pali loanwords in reference to the Buddha's teachings. First, there has always been the concept of *bok-da'da-ma'* (P. *buddha dhamma*) or simply *ta-ya"*,⁸ signifying the individual truths of the collectivity of cosmological and natural laws—the true laws of conditional relations which the Buddha sought to explain. 'Insight meditation' (Burmese *Wi'pat-tha-na*, Pali *vipassanā*) is commonly referred to as 'applying oneself to the *da-ma'*' (*ta-ya" a" htok thi*). Second, there has always been *bok-da'tha-tha-na* (P. *buddha sāsana*), meaning the Buddha's explanations of the many truths *da-ma'* in the form of his instructions, their embodiment in the scriptures, their transmission over time by the monastic community, and their realisation in personal experience. In this manner, the body of the Buddha's teachings (*tha-tha-na*) is said to be constituted by as many as eighty-four thousand *da-ma'*. Though the pronunciation may vary between Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand, these terms, being drawn from the Pali language and actually used in the Buddhist Scriptures, are intelligible across different Buddhist communities.

During my stay in Burma, I encountered several Burmese⁹ who alleged that *bok-da'ba-tha* (P. *buddha bhāsā*), a third term for Buddhism, had come into the Burmese language relatively recently. There are two important points to note about this term. First, though a compound made up of two individual Pali loanwords meaning 'Buddha' (*bok-da'*) and 'speech, language, esp. vernacular, dialect, subject' (*ba-tha*),¹⁰ the compound word is not to be found in the Buddhist Scriptures or in the commentaries, and it is not intelligible across the different Buddhist communities. Second, it should be noted that this term is today popularly used by the Burmese with reference to their own Buddhism and Buddhism in general. This development, namely of adopting an 'unscriptural' reference to Buddhism unintelligible to other Buddhist communities,

8 The Burmese equivalent of Pali *dhamma* occurs as either *da-ma'* or *ta-ya"* in different compound words, representing the Pali and Sanskrit (from *tra* as in *tantra*?) root of the term respectively. The terms overlap, but the latter additionally covers a sense of conventional law and justice.

9 The recent origins of the term *bok-da'ba-tha* had been affirmed to me, for example, by: the Director of Research at the Department of Religious Affairs, the Librarian of Rangoon University, and the chief researcher at the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha.

10 (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921-5). In Burmese *ba-tha* is also used to refer to subject matter, religion and views in general. For example, Aw-ba-tha (1975) links *ba-tha* to the following categories: The Six Great Religions, The 101 Languages; and The Four Reasons for Taking Refuge in Teachings. The term *bok-da'ba-tha* has been translated into Pali as 'Buddhist teachings / views' (*bok-da'wa-da'*) by Hok Sein (1978).

it would appear, is something Burma has in common with at least one term for Buddhism in the Sinhalese language.¹¹

Myin' Hswei was a medical doctor who went to the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, a famous meditation teacher, to seek Buddhist answers to questions thrown up by his western medical education.¹² After noting that during the Ava Period (1765-1837) Burmans came into contact with foreign peoples such as the Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, and Indians, Myin' Hswei wrote:

The term *bok-da'ba-tha* cannot be found in the Buddhist canon and the early religious and secular chronicles. It came into use only after foreigners came to Burma... Although the term arose in the time of Bo-daw Min"ta-ya" [1782-1819 AD], it had not gone into current use until after there were no kings, when Burma was ruled by the English and from the time that Christians could readily missionize. (Myin' Swei 1978:4-5)

Myin' Hswei's view of the foreigner's influence on the Burmese term for Buddhism may be set out in several stages. First, early Burmese terminology for foreigners implied a contrast in religious tenets and values:

These foreigners the Burmese called white Indian (*ka-la"hp̄yū*) or dark Indian (*ka-la"me*), and the Europeans were also called 'the kind of people who wear hats' (*tho" hsaung lu-myō"*).¹³ Implied in these terms was that, as they believed that life was at an end at death in this life, their views were radically opposed to the 'right view' (*tha-ma deik-hti'*) which the Burmese people subscribed to.

The concept 'right-viewed' (*tha-ma deik-hti'*) was previously used in Burma to refer both to those who followed the Buddha's teachings in the spirit, and by implication to all Burmese Buddhists; while 'wrong-viewed' (*meik-hsa deik-hti'*) was applied to those holding views contrary to the *da-ma'*, and by implication to all foreigners, especially non-Buddhists.

In the second phase of his argument Myin' Hswei proceeded to blame Judson, an American Baptist missionary who wrote the first comprehensive English-Burmese and Burmese-English dictionaries, for the introduction of this term *bok-da'ba-tha*:

Then the missionaries arrived, and among the best-known missionaries was Judson, who came to Burma in 1813. Towards the Amarapura period during the reign of Bo-daw-min"ta-ya" [1792-1819 AD], missionaries such as Judson took offence at being called 'wrong-viewed', and in the attempt

11 Kitsiri Malalgoda (1972:164) described how Christian missionaries adopted terms such as *ādahati*, used by the Sinhalese for deva worship, to refer to 'Christianity' and 'Buddhism' in the Sinhalese language; later these came to be used by the Sinhalese themselves in reference to Buddhism. He noted that '*Buddhagama* [introduced from Sanskrit] was the term that the missionaries used to refer to Buddhism; it was only later that it gained acceptance among the Buddhists themselves as a term of self-reference'.

12 Myin' Hswei drew much of his argument from a book entitled 'What is Buddhism' (*Bok-da'ba-tha hso da ba le*) by (A-nyei-n-sa" a-yei"paing-min" U") Bo.

13 Another term for European was 'white face kind of people' (*myet-hna hp̄yū lu-myō"*).

to stamp this out and to have Christianity also referred to as 'right viewed' he referred to the Burmese as *bok-da'ba-tha* people.

Judson's 'play' proved successful. Today English-Burmese dictionaries invariably translate the English word 'Buddhism' as *bok-da'ba-tha*.¹⁴ Falling now under the blanket term for 'religion' (*ba-tha*), Buddhism has become just another type of religion. If we reserve the term 'Buddhism' to cover our first two terms (*bok-da'da-ma'* and *bok-da'tha-tha-na*) which mean the spirit of the Buddha's teaching and its transmission and realisation respectively, then the term 'Buddhendom'¹⁵ is a suitable translation for this recently invented third term, meaning more specifically the region and community (in a non-ordained cultural sense) where Buddhism is the received religion.¹⁶

On different 'Buddhisms'

How is this terminology for Buddhism differentiated? While not everyone would make a conscious distinction between the terms,¹⁷ many do. For example, an eminent monk meditation teacher indicated to me that '*bok-da'tha-tha-na* is the real teaching, but *bok-da'ba-tha* is about culture'.¹⁸ In other words, while *bok-da'tha-tha-na* represents the original teachings of the Buddha, *bok-da'ba-tha* represents the teachings of the Buddha as socially constituted (and distorted) by man.

Even those who do not make a conscious distinction between the two terms sometimes suggest a sense of difference by the way they use the terms. For example, the subtle differences in connotations of these terms becomes clear from a description in the hagiography of the meditation teacher (U") Ba' Hkin. In an episode recounting his own life, Ko Lei" began contrasting 'Buddhendom [*bok-da'ba-tha*] handed down from mother and father' (*mi'yo" hpa-la*

14 Lane (1841) and Tet Toe (1975) do not include the term Buddhism, but Ba Han (1951) and Tun Nyein (1906) translate it by the new term *bok-da'ba-tha*.

15 By analogy to 'Christendom', which the *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1975) defined as 'that part of the world in which Christianity is the received religion', emphasising the culturally received aspect of religion over its spirit and original teaching/meanings.

16 Spiro translated *bok-da'tha-tha-na* as 'the doctrine of the Buddha', *bok-da'ba-tha* as 'the worship of the Buddha' (1970:32), and *da-ma'* as 'the basic message of nibbanic Buddhism—suffering and release from suffering' (1970:427). But he did not go into detail on the distinctions between these terms.

17 Many use the terms interchangeably without giving it another thought, and not everyone makes a clear distinction in use. It is interesting for example how the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw in some of his famous Burmese (not Pali) works often referred to Buddhism simply as *bok-da'ba-tha*, but sometimes referred to a combination of both terms, namely *bok-da'ba-tha tha-tha-na* (Le-di Hsa-ya-daw 1965:31 cf 1978:60).

18 That *bok-da'ba-tha* has to do with Buddhist culture is found in such expressions as 'according to the customs of *bok-da'ba-tha win'* (Kei-la-tha 1976:ka). Also, the YMBA (Young Men's Buddhist Association) was known in Burmese as a combination of both terms for Buddhism, namely *a-myo" ba-tha tha-tha-na*, which translates as: 'nationality/race', 'culture/language', and 'the teachings of the Buddha'.

bok-da'ba-tha)¹⁹ with Buddhist teachings of the monks (*tha-tha-na*) the way this was commonly understood in his youth:²⁰

I was born from Burmese Buddhist (*bok-da'ba-tha*) parents. I was educated between the ages of five and ten years old in a nunnery in Sa-gaing" and with the Kyan-hkin"chaung" Hsa-ya-daw...At the age of six I had only a very basic understanding of Buddhism (*bok-da'ba-tha-yei*"), but I understood that monks and nuns were sons and daughters of the noble Buddha who had renounced the world and the society of man, and that they were in charge of scriptural learning, which is the Buddha's heritage. Although I understood that some practised the more noble meditation (*pa-di'bat*), these were very few and most practised scriptural learning...I learnt that those who practised were more special than ordinary people. Meditating (lit. 'sitting (and internalizing) the *ta-ya*"'), propagating the meditational objects (*ka-ma-htan*"), is not something everyone can do. Not all monks and nuns can meditate. Only those who have much meritorious accomplishment (*pa-na-mi*) and want to achieve enlightenment (*neik-ban*) speedily can meditate...It is not easy work. When young I always held that the practice of *ta-ya*" [*da-ma*'], which not all members of the monastic community and nuns who got into the society of the *tha-tha-na* (*tha-tha-na' baung tho' yauk shi' bi*) could do, was not suitable for those who had not renounced the society of man..." (Ko Lei" 1980:245-6).

This distinguishes between the *tha-tha-na* as the domain for monks, the *da-ma' / ta-ya*" as the knowledge uncovered by man in meditation and *bok-da'ba-tha* as inherited 'family' Buddhism. Ko Lei" proceeded with a description of his youth and what Buddhism then meant to the unordained. To the realm of 'Buddhendom' of the unordained (*bok-da'ba-tha*) belonged: organizing novitiation ceremonies, practising charity, taking the precepts at sabbath days, listening to the monk's preachings, visiting monasteries and pagodas, worshipping the monks, and reciting passages irrespective of whether one understood them or not. In the past, to the realm of proper 'Buddhism' of the ordained (*tha-tha-na*) belonged: learning the Buddha's teachings, guarding and teaching them, living under high moral precepts, meditating, and having a detailed understanding what one recites.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the years leading up to national independence and the Sixth Synod held in Rangoon, many Burmese began to query their inherited Buddhist customs, and formed the impression that these had become 'contaminated' by foreign views. Ko Lei"

19 Dr. Hkin Nyo informs me that there is a book by (Da-ma-sa-ri-ya) Thaung" Lwin, which is entitled *Mi'yo" hpa-la bok-da'ba-tha*.

20 These paragraphs taken from Ko Lei" (1980), given in full, would occupy great length, and are therefore paraphrased here—they are not complete translations.

described how he underwent something of an emotional crisis when he became aware of the disjunction between his 'modern' knowledge and his inherited Buddhism:²¹

On reading the views of some sects which were said to be 'religious' ('the affairs of *ba-tha*, *ba-tha-yei*'), I found that Buddhendom (*bok-da'ba-tha*) was mixed up with ideas about science, sociology, and economics. Only after being shaken up like that did I come to understand that I must get to know all about Buddhendom (*bok-da'ba-tha*) which I had inherited from my parents in the past, the Buddhendom (*bok-da'ba-tha*) I had accepted without paying any attention to it. I was overcome with surprise that this realisation should not have come before. I made a vow immediately to investigate...' (Ko Lei" 1980:245-50).

It was almost as if, with the foreigner now in retreat from Burma, Ko Lei" was stimulated to meditate and to think about Buddhism. But Ko Lei"s choice of language in his reference to 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) reveals what he was about to conclude later after reading accounts by foreigners of Burmese Buddhist practice written in English during this era, namely that:

While writing rough sketches of the Buddha's teachings I began to realise the dangers of mixing with Hindu views. Only after continued studies did something become clear to me. This is that with the reading on the essence of the Buddha's *ta-ya*" in the literature, discussing it, and exchanging views about it leads to not knowing what one is holding onto—only after meditating yourself will you be able to see. I came to hold the view that only after experiencing it yourself will you understand (Ko Lei" with reference to his own meditation experience 1980:251-2).

Ko Lei" thus found out, while practising meditation (Buddhism in the true sense), that his Buddhist heritage was contaminated with foreign, and in particular Hindu, ideas. Though unordained, he chose the 'true Buddhist' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*) road of meditation which led to a realisation of the essence of the Buddha's teachings (*ta-ya*"), not the 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) road of unquestioned acceptance of received Burmese culture, laity, and worldly knowledge.

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The difference in attitude between Wi'thu'da's characterisation of this century as a 'museum period' and Ko Lei" as a 'purity period' should now be clear.²² Both refer to the same discontinuity in Buddhism in which the foreigner played such an important role, but while Wi'thu'da treated the novitiation ceremony still as the most important event in lay Buddhist practice, Ko Lei" was motivated to see the novitiation ceremony, and much of traditional Buddhism 'handed down from father and mother' as being full of illegitimate foreign ideas, and

21 On this disjunction between Buddhism and contemporary reality Maung Maung (1980:110) noted, 'at the beginning of the 1930s, the intelligentsia considered these elementary forms of Burmese Buddhist life (repeated recitation of the *bawana*, acts of charity and sabbath moral precepts), intended for the average laymen, as insufficient. They sought out religious teachers willing to take them through spiritual endeavours usually undertaken only by mature *rahans* [monks] after years of study. This was a revolution in the concept of lay-religious obligation. It was not consciously inculcated by the Sangha, but it nevertheless took place within the Burmese intelligentsia during the 1930s.'

The importance of initiatives by the unordained in 20th century Burmese Buddhism has, of course, been noted by many observers (King 1964, 1980; Mendelson 1975). But it has hitherto been mainly explained in terms of the global underlying institutional discontinuities (royalty, sangharaja, education, etc), not, as Ko Lei" so vividly conveyed, as the aggregate of emotional crises faced by individual laymen because of the incompatibility between their received western education and Burmese Buddhist origins.

22 See also end-notes 'museum culture'.

viewed the present period as the ideal instead, where scientific meditation can be practised. Ko Lei" realised that Buddhism was transformed from the nominal observance of Buddhism as *bok-da'ba-tha*, inherited from parents and as improvised by man, to an active Buddhism as *bok-da'tha-tha-na*, of personal discovery and scientific experiment. Here, it no longer mattered that he was a layman, for during this era everyone has the opportunity to meditate and realise the true nature of *da-ma'*: there was change in Buddhism across the board for everyone, not just for Ko Lei".

We have ended up with three terms for Buddhism: the universal truths of cause and effect which the Buddha sought to explain (*da-ma'*); the Buddha's instructions on these, their transmission over time in the scriptures and their study, the monastic community, and their personal intuitive realisation (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*); and a term for the way these have been received by the unordained through 'culture' and 'convention', i.e. the appropriation of their meanings to manufacture an identity for their own instrumental purpose (*bok-da'ba-tha*). The latter term functions at two levels: on the one hand it is used as a term for 'Buddhism' to distinguish it from other 'foreign' religions, while on the other hand it is used as a term for 'man-made Buddhism' to distinguish it from the pure and original teachings of the Buddha. This double edged distinction is evident in Sun"lun" (1972:45-6), where an eminent monk pupil of the Sun"lun" argues that: 'In this world there are four *ba-tha*—Buddhendom [*bok-da'ba-tha*], Christianity [*hka-rit-yan ba-tha*], Hinduism [*hin-du ba-tha*], and Islam [*ma-ha-mei-din ba-tha*]. But in reality there are as many *ba-tha* as there are people... each person has a *ba-tha'*.

Different 'Buddhists'

There is no single equivalent to our term 'Buddhist' in the Burmese language. Minimally defined, a Buddhist is one who keeps the Five Precepts and seeks shelter in the Three Refuges (the Buddha, the monastic order and the Dhamma). There are many freestanding associations, but there is no Church binding laity and clergy together in a single Buddhist community. Individuals may roam around as many different monasteries, pagodas and meditation centres as they please, and, apart from offering charity, taking the moral precepts, meditating, renouncing into the forest, and undergoing ordination, which may be carried out anywhere, there is no ritual that binds together the ordained and the unordained in a single community. If there is no clear externally recognisable attribute by which one is a Buddhist, then the implication is that there

is little emphasis on 'conversion' to Buddhism.²³ It may be argued that, in the absence of such binding rituals of baptism, communion or confession, the only instrument for Burmese Buddhists to measure the degree of Buddhism adhered to is to use language of classification to mark grading. It should be noted, however, that these are fluid categories used differently by different people and subject to dispute among Buddhists.

The various Burmese terms for 'Buddhist' have an oppositional character very similar to the terms for 'Buddhism' considered above. If anything, they are even more nuanced, and there are more of them. Among others,²⁴ there are the following:

Term 1. 'Inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na*) (*tha-tha-na win*²⁵). It is a category limited to the 'chosen ones', used for those Buddhists with a heightened and special involvement with the Buddhist teachings through ordination, the observance of high moral standards, and through meditation. Few if any Burmese Buddhists would dispute that ordained monks are 'members of the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na win*) by virtue of their ordination according to the rules set down by the Buddha. Ordination of monks and novices 'enters them into the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na' baung tho' win thi*),²⁶ and, having left the 'society of man' (*lu baung hma' htwet thi*), they have become 'sons of the Buddha' (*hpa-ya" tha" daw*). It is this formal transition from the society of man to that of the *tha-tha-na* around which is built this enormously important Burmese tradition of novitiation.

23 Historically this lack of emphasis on conversion is shown in the earliest recorded eye-witness descriptions of Buddhism in Burma; when Nicolo di Conti described Buddhism, it was as a by-product of his conversion to Islam, not Buddhism. He was granted absolution by Pope Eugenius IV for his (forcible) conversion to Islam after returning home in 1444 only on condition that he describe his journeys, which included the earliest detailed eye-witness accounts of Buddhist life (Hall 1968:232-3).

24 Ven Saddhatissa suggested that 'disciple' or *upāsaka* (*u'pa-tha-ka*) is the appropriate Pali term for Buddhist, but this is not as much used in Burmese as the terms listed in this article. Also, Rhys Davids & Stede (1921-5:77) suggested that 'the early Buddhists had no such ideas as we cover with the words Buddhist and Indian' where the Pali term *ariya* 'often comes very near to what they would have considered the best in each'. I would agree with Rhys Davids & Stede that Burmese regard their own monk *a-ri'ya* as the highest in both Buddhism as facilitated by Burmese culture and that they take national pride in these, but they are not routine terms for 'Buddhist'.

25 See end-notes 'win'.

26 The idea of movement is inherent, in that it is common to say, e.g. 'after entering into the holy *tha-tha-na* the monks...' (*tha-tha-na-daw tho' win yauk pi" ya'han" tha-ma-nei pyu' thu do' thi...*) (BTNA 1981:43). The term *ba-tha thwin" thi*, 'to initiate or introduce into any particular religion' is used for Christianity and Islam (Judson 1953). The same term is used for Hindu initiation into caste *zat thwin" thi*, 'to make enter into a caste', also referred to as 'enter into a *ba-tha*' (*ba-tha thwin" thi*) (Judson 1953).

The term 'outside the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na pa*) is used to refer to the time and place where there is no dispensation of Buddhist teachings, i.e. before the advent of a Buddha and at the end of a dispensation when the teachings are no longer realisable by man (MAA 1980), and the Three Refuges (*Bok-da*', *Da-ma*', and *Than-ga*) are no longer accessible.²⁷ Ko Lei" (1980:5-6) described foreigners coming from 'outside' 'into' the *tha-tha-na* at Ba' Hkin's meditation centre as follows:

There were many people like me who one would have thought had nothing to do with meditation. One could find Hindus... I sat in meditation with a Baboo²⁸ wearing a dhoty. I listened to the *ta-ya*" with a Baboo Indian lady, covered in a sari from top to toe. I also took the *ta-ya*" with an American girl dressed in a gown. I discussed the *ta-ya*" with English, Americans and Germans who were in trousers. I also met teachers of science .. professors ...doctors.. And I saw wives of ambassadors meditate... I saw with my own eyes in amazement the variety of people who, though coming from outside Buddhism (*tha-tha-na i a-pa' hma*'), took refuge into Buddhism (*tha-tha-na a-dwin" tho*) because of the qualities of *ta-ya*" this centre has.

Term 2. 'Inheritor of Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na' mwei*). This category is explicitly reserved as a title for sponsors of the monastic ordination ceremony and implies that the sponsors have provided the eight monk requisites.²⁹ It implies individuals who are considered nearer to the *tha-tha-na* than 'ordinary' laymen who have never sponsored an ordination. The story goes that Asoka, coming back from fighting a war, one day invited in a novice, who somewhat unexpectedly took a seat on the king's throne: the novice considered himself superior to the king, and had no need to pay his respects. The king asked him 'what is your *da-ma*"', to which the novice replied 'all effects arise from appropriate causes' (*yei da-ma' hei-tok-pa' ba-wa*). The king, having fought a war which had claimed the lives of many, regretted his deeds. He became a Buddhist and wanted to repair what he had done wrong by building hospitals, bridges, roads, and planting trees. He also constructed 84,000 wells, 84,000 reservoirs, irrigation canals and dams, and 84,000 pagodas. With these works he thought himself an 'inheritor of the Buddhist religious realm' (*tha-tha-na mwei*), but when he asked Mauk-ga-li' pok-ta'teik-tha, this monk told him that he was merely a 'master of charity' (*da-na' shin*), and that it required the ordination of his sons to allow him to become an 'inheritor of the Buddhist religious realm' (Wi'thu'da 1982:9-12; see also Mu'nein-da

27 This sense of the term 'outside Buddhism' is included, for example, in *Magganga Dipani* by Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1965:228), which should be compared with its Burmese original (Le-di Hsa-ya-daw 1978). Judson (1953) defined this term as meaning 'destitute of any system of religion; to be without (not belonging to) any particular system of religion', or more simply 'heathen'. Dr. Hkin Nyo points out that no monk would use this for the unordained because it would sound too much like an insult.

28 Baboo is 'properly a term of respect attached to a name, like Master or Mr., and formerly in some parts of Hindustan applied to certain persons of distinction' (Yule & Burnell 1903:44).

29 Other titles include: 'monk sponsor' (*ya-han" da-gu/da-ga-ma*) for someone who sponsors the ordination of a monk, and 'pagoda sponsor' (*hpa-ya" da-gu*) for someone who sponsors the building of a pagoda. The eight requisites (*pa-reik-hka-ya shii-pa"*) include: the three garments, alms-bowl, water filter, razor & thread, and belt.

1982:562). Anyone offering other types of charity is merely referred to as a 'lord of charity' (*da-na' shin*).

Terms 3 and 4. 'Associate of Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na hnwe*)³⁰ and 'those carrying out duties for Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na wun-dan*). This refers to Buddhists who are not 'inside *tha-tha-na*' but who are, or consider themselves, more than normal unordained Buddhists. They include: hermits, devotees, nuns, trustees, etc or 'those carrying out duties for the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na wun-dan*).

Term 5. 'Inside/a member of Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha win*). This category is the widest and least specific. Aw-ba-tha (1975:394) wrote that 'the literature suggests that one is only a true member of Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha win*) if complete in the following five beliefs: i) Belief in the Buddha, ii) the *da-ma*, iii) the monastic order, iv) the teachings about good and bad *kan*, and v) the good and bad consequences that flow from it.

This term is new and is not intelligible across Buddhist communities.³¹ It is often found all in one reference with 'Burmese' such as in 'Burmese Buddhist' (*ba-ma bok-da'ba-tha*), and in such mundane references as 'Buddhists and the problem of spirit worship'.³² Most English-Burmese dictionaries actually use this term in translation for the English word 'Buddhist'. First, when used in contradistinction to members of other religions, it refers to Buddhists in the all-inclusive sense, including those 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) as well as 'associates of Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na hnwe*) (e.g. the ordinary laity practising the elementary Buddhism described by Ko Lei" above).³³ Second, it may also be used to distinguish between different Buddhists. For example, it may be used in one sentence along with 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*), in which case its meaning is restricted to only the laity³⁴ who are in that grey area of being neither 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) nor 'heretical' (*tha-tha-na pa' lu*). However, rarely, if ever, is this new

30 This expression occurs sometimes with *bok-da'ba-tha* instead of *tha-tha-na*; for example in Hi'tei-thi (1981:31) there is reference to *bok-da'ba-tha nwe win hi'tei-thi thu-daw-zin*.

31 Hok Sein (1978) translated the term *bok-da'ba-tha-win* into Pali as 'one holding Buddhist views' (*bok-da'wa-di*).

32 *Bok-da'ba-tha-win-mya' hnin' nat ko' gwe hmu' pyat-tha-na*, the title of a book by U' Hla' Thein" Htut on a question of particular concern to the unordained, but hardly of relevance to monks.

33 Thus, a little booklet available from the Dept of Religious Affairs (Kan Nyun" 1982) is entitled 'Facts every person inside *bok-da'ba-tha* requires to know'. The same term *bok-da'ba-tha-win* is used in Kan Min" (1949:21).

34 There are a wide range of references which suggest that *bok-da'ba-tha-win* is often used with specific reference to the Buddhist laity in general (of course it is also sometimes used for all Buddhists, including monks). Thus Kei-la-tha' (1982) used a wide sample of these terms in his book: on p. *ka*' he wrote 'according to cultural customs inside Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win do' i da-lei' hton' zan a-ya*), and on pp 171,176 he wrote about 'Burmese Buddhists' (*bok-da'ba-tha myan-ma lu-myo*"), on p. 36 about 'every Buddhist householder' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win ein daung zu' daing*"). The Ma-ha-si (BTNA 1981:40) preached to *bok-da'ba-tha-win* on the meaning of the *ka-htein*: all these use our 'inside Buddhendom' notion, and definitely refer to the laity. Wi'thu'da (1982:10-11) also recounted the episode where King A-thaw"ka' asked Mauk-ga-li' pok-ta'telk-tha who belonged to 'the world of *bok-da'ba-tha*', and whether with his donations he could thereby become an 'inheritor of the *tha-tha-na*'. He was not considered to be the latter until he would carry out novitiation on his sons.

term 'inside Buddhism' used to refer to an exclusive group of monks, though it may be if the group includes some unordained persons.

These terms for Buddhist are by no means clearcut and are subject to debate between Buddhists. They operate according to what Sahlins (1985:xi) has called both 'prescriptive' as well as 'performative' criteria; i.e. by means of inherited conventions such as the ordination ceremony applied to monks and nuns, and by means of action, as applicable to hermits (renunciation) and meditators (meditation).

The 'prescribed' (publicly unambiguous by virtue of tradition and text) sense of 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) as 'ordained' is valid only in relation to men or boys, not to women and girls. Though nuns are ordained, their ordination is not 'orthodox' in that it is not performed by at least four members belonging to a lineage which goes all the way back to the Buddha; nuns cannot prove such continuous lineage to the female monks in the days of the Buddha, and therefore their ordination ceremony cannot be publicly recognised. But I knew several nuns who—when I posed the question—argued that their ordination, their shaven heads and their robes, entitled them to the status of 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*),³⁵ but this status was denied by many of my monk contacts.

But there are also 'performative' criteria by means of which many claim 'membership of the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na win*). The simple act of renunciation into the forest is interpreted by some Buddhists as conveying that hermits are 'inside the *tha-tha-na*' by virtue of their complete renunciation from the world and living in the forest, despite the fact that no ordination takes place.³⁶ Also, the practice of *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation by unordained may sometimes be interpreted as a criterion of whether one belongs to the *tha-tha-na win* category or not. It was

35 In *Tha-tha-na-yei* (1980:162,163), on the question of registration of all nuns, the term 'nun' is quite explicitly prefixed with *bok-da'ba-tha*, not *bok-da'tha-tha-na*, thus stressing that they are nuns by local Buddhist custom but not according to the formal procedures of the monastic community. But again this was hotly disputed by others. On the other hand, I have encountered several nuns claiming that they are *tha-tha-na win*. One (from Le-di Daik, Mon-ywa) also claimed that the sponsors of the nun ordination ceremony should, like the sponsors of the novice and monk ordination ceremony, also be referred to as 'honourable mother' (*me-daw*—also applied to the mother of royalty) and 'noble father' (*hka-me" daw*—also applied to the father of royalty). She also claimed that nuns are 'daughters of the Buddha', like monks and novices are 'sons of the Buddha'. This use of language was suggested to be inappropriate by my monk informant. This particular nun also denied that unordained *wi'pat-tha-na* meditators are *tha-tha-na win*, because 'they have no Pali name and have no shaven heads'. Meeting some nuns in Moulmein, I found that monks had criticised nuns for using a monk's begging bowl on their alms round instead of their customary nun's tray. I interpret this dispute as underlying the disagreements about language referred to here.

36 For example, the question of whether a hermit should be considered 'inside the *tha-tha-na*' was discussed in detail in *Ya-zein-da* (1937:65,67). Compare the members of a charity association who were considered 'members of the lineage of Buddhism' (*bok-da'ba-tha-mue-win*) (Hi'tei-thi 1981:31). The Ma-ha-si noted that Indonesia had no monasteries which could be considered 'member of the Buddha *tha-tha-na*' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na-win hpon"gyi" kyaung"*) (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:136).

asked in Than" Maung (1979:33): 'Is *wi'pat-tha-na* "outside the *tha-tha-na*"?' The answer is 'No'. 'What *ta-ya* "exists outside the *tha-tha-na*"?'. Answer: 'Charity, morality, and concentration *ta-ya*'. This could be interpreted in two ways: either, that *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation is unique to Buddhism, but charity and morality are not, since they are present in other religions; or that *wi'pat-tha-na* has a unique status within Buddhism itself, which cannot be claimed by charity, morality or concentration. Since the author was referring to the Buddha's pre- vs post-Enlightenment teachings, and, writing in Burmese (not Pali), was trying to encourage the unordained Buddhists to take up meditation, it is the latter meaning that is likely.

So the criterion of ordination helps to distinguish between 'core' and 'peripheral' Buddhists; it puts monks 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*), and it relegates lay meditators, nuns, and hermits to the grey, contested areas where this category shades off into 'associate of Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na hnwe*), into 'inside Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha win*), into finally heretics and 'wrong-viewed' (*meik-hsa deik-hti*). Yet if the criterion of core membership is religious action rather than ordination, than unordained meditators may claim the core area for themselves and push out of contest those monks who are merely ordained but are not spiritually active. I have overheard unordained meditators speak of themselves as 'monks of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-ha' beik-hku*) or even 'human monk' (*lu hpon "gyi"*): also meditators sometimes use sacred vocabulary usually applied only to monks.³⁷ Since the term 'inside Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win*) is so diluted a reference with no status attached to it, many meditators prefer—in the conviction that they enact the Buddha's teachings in meditation—to use the category 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) to describe their status as a core Buddhist, equivalent in status to the ordained monks. But using such language in public is controversial.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to understand how Burmese Buddhists have coped with these intrusive challenges from *outside* Buddhism—the foreigner, other religions, secular education, science, etc.—, and what kind of attitudes and categories they evolved to make sense of the status of Buddhism within the new world-order pertaining today. In subsequent chapters I will emphasise the way Burmese Buddhists have made sense of their religion in terms of challenges *internal* to Buddhism: i.e. in terms of the categories of practice (charity, morality, meditation) and scriptural learning.

37 See chapter 5 for more on this distinction.

A potted history recounted the effect of the foreigner on Burmese Buddhism, indicating how a lack of support by foreign powers for Buddhism was perceived by Buddhists as debasing the morality of the people and as ultimately leading to national instability. The efforts by the independence government to encourage Buddhist charity, morality, meditation and scriptural learning, were part of the process of reestablishing both Buddhism and government. Also, the introduction of the printing press fundamentally altered the nature of Buddhist learning to facilitate participation by the unordained in scriptural learning and meditation practice. In the course of this period, one type of attitude emerged which uncritically accepted all collective inheritance of customs pertaining to Buddhism from the past as being of equivalent 'Buddhist' value; another attitude was emerged based on a realisation that only Buddhist knowledge discovered by oneself in meditation and in conformity with a limited core of scriptures was of true 'Buddhist' value. The first, with eyes steadfastly locked onto the immediate past, criticises those who prefer to forget about customary practice and go with current trends. The second, with eyes locked onto the ancient times of the Buddha and his disciples, is critical of those who accept Buddhist customs inherited from recent generations and who incorporate elements 'untrue' and 'foreign' to 'original' Buddhism of the scriptures. These attitudes, I have argued, bear a relationship to the challenge posed by the advent of the foreigner, and to the ways the terms for Buddhism are applied.

In the context of these changes new Burmese terms have come to be popularly used to convey new meanings about Buddhism. The terms 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) and 'inside Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win*) function at two levels. At one level they refer to the generic 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' in contradistinction to foreign 'wrong-viewed' religions and its adherents. But at another level the same terms imply reference to Buddhendom as a cultural and

parentally 'man-made' received religion and its exponents as distinct from a purer Buddhism (in the sense of *tha-tha-na*) as monastically transmitted from the time of the Buddha in all its purity through ordination, and through its implementation in action, the domain to which the ordained and those with a claim to exceptional Buddhist performance such as meditators lay claim.

In conclusion I wish to make three points: about the alleged laicisation of Buddhism; about the inadequacy of the English term 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist'; and about the Pali trap.

It has been suggested in much literature on 'modern' Buddhism that what has taken place in Theravada South East Asia is a process of 'laicisation', whereby the layman (I prefer 'unordained') takes a central place in Buddhism. This was suggested by scholars such as Mendelson, Brohm and King.³⁹ For example, Brohm (1957:351-2) concluded that, 'it is difficult to see wherein the attraction of the monastic life in urban surroundings could long endure', and with reference to the popular practice of meditation, 'nothing could more clearly reflect this trend toward urban secularization and the further erosion of the primary foundation of Buddhist monasticism'. Considering the way many meditators mark their status as 'core' Buddhists in language, one would be better off suggesting the reverse, namely that there has been a 'monasticisation' of the unordained. The emphasis contemporary meditators put on being part of the *tha-tha-na* does not suggest the radical displacement of old roles by new roles and old institutions by new ones (even the terminology of meditation centres has been largely derived from the monastic terminology). There may be actual differences which we are to explore in later chapters, but in the ideal the centrality of the monkhood and of the monastery to Buddhism have not been challenged and, by aspiring to a Buddhism of the monastery, the meditator in fact perpetuates an old order of Buddhism.

38 One of the striking points of King's argument is that the WM movement is really about the incorporation of Burmese laity in the field of significant religious action previously the monopoly of the monk. 'Formerly the almost exclusive privilege of the monk, whose whole life pattern is geared to make it possible, meditation is now being practised by many laymen' (1964: 57).

He further referred to the 'new layman', who provides 'the central force in the most significant developments in Theravada Buddhism today' (1964: 76-77). We learn that, 'there never was an absolute prohibition of lay meditation in Theravada tradition; but practically speaking it was confined to the monks, because only their mode of life was suited to the attainment of jhanic skills ... laypersons did not think of themselves as capable of that direct seeking of enlightenment for which the monk's life was specifically designed'.

King referred to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw and the Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw as 'initiators of a gradual relaxation of the monkish "ban" on lay meditation' (1980: 120), and 'it was with monks themselves seeking "clear cut" methods, some notable ones among them encouraging lay meditation, and the "rediscovery" of vipasana as a method in its own right, that actual centers for laypeople came to be established perhaps forty years ago' (1980: 122). King went even so far as to say that this meditational activity poses a threat to the monkhood, noting that 'one might even say... that meditation will be the means of freeing Buddhism from its dominance by the Sangha' (1964: 215). He characterised it as based on a 'Protestant search' and a 'Protestant response': as 'a kind of "Protestant" searching for primitive simplicity beneath the later accretions of an age-old traditionalized practice' and 'the response... "protestant" in nature ... a new practical emphasis upon a standard scripture well known to all Theravadins' (1964: 197-8).

Since the 1960s, a succession of scholars have commented on the context of contemporary Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhism. However, vernacular categories employed with reference to Buddhism have been ignored in two important ways.

First, many scholars who have described Theravada Southeast Asian Buddhism have, despite their emphasis on context, taken for granted that 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' are legitimate generic references to tangible phenomena holding true across different communities. Spiro's (1970:16) view with reference to Burmese Buddhism that '[the] Burmese garb differs from its Thai or Sinhalese garb in only minor ways' is still held by many. Terms like 'kammatic Buddhism', 'nibbanic Buddhism', 'protestant Buddhism', 'Buddhismus modernismus', 'elite Buddhism', etc, were coined by authors without much thought about vernacular categories. We have noted how the English terms 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' collapse the following important distinctions in the Burmese vernacular. The distinctions are between the truths as they are (*da-ma'* or *ta-ya''*), as they were truthfully taught by the Buddha and transmitted or realised by the monastic community (*tha-tha-na*), and as they were distorted into a conventional attribute of a community of people irrespective of the purity of their knowledge (*ba-tha*). 'Buddhists' come in different classes according to the relative distance from true knowledge. Proof of continuity of lineage through ordination makes one a 'member of Buddhism', direct support of this by making ordination possible makes one an 'inheritor of Buddhism', playing a general supportive role by taking initiative beyond the Five Precepts of the unordained makes one an 'associate of Buddhism', and, finally, doing the minimum duties within Buddhism by keeping the Five Precepts makes one 'inside Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win*). The disputes that arise over whether the nuns, meditators, and hermits are 'inside Buddhism' or merely 'associate of Buddhism'/'inside Buddhendom', may be considered unnecessary by many of the more enlightened Burmese Buddhists since all this dispute is about 'Buddhendom', about conventional language. However, the unavoidable choice of one of these terms in Burmese commits the speaker/writer who uses them to refer to this sense of hierarchy. English, not having evolved as a language spoken by a Buddhist community, is blind to these subtle distinctions in the vernaculars spoken by Buddhist communities.

Second, in an introductory paragraph to this thesis I noted how Pali *sappāya* means according to Rhys Davids 'suitable' or 'beneficial', yet this loanword into Burmese has come to mean 'water a Buddha image or monk with water' and 'inspire to worship' (with reference to a pagoda or monk). This 'Pali trap' of habitual use of romanised Pali for Pali loanwords in the vernacular as pursued in most prominent works on Buddhism in Thailand and Burma (e.g. Spiro and Tambiah) is problematic. It is doubtful that even terms such as *tha-tha-na*, the way used in Burmese, correspond in all contexts to what we reconstruct as being the

scriptural/commentarial 'Pali' meanings we attribute to sāsana. It has been suggested to me⁴⁰ that in Burmese vernacular the term *tha-tha-na* is used in two ways: in its standard 'Buddhist' way (i.e. Pali sāsana) which is intelligible without the need for further explanation across Buddhist communities, and in a Burmese way. The first includes all the standard definitions noted above. Examples of the second might be when the term 'this insults the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na saw ka" de*) is used for Muslims who hang out a woman's dress (*hta-mein*) on the monastery fence in Moulmein (this has happened in recent years which has greatly angered Burmese Buddhists). If such expression and its underlying idea have no precedent in the scriptures, then this latter meaning may be classified as 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) which is best understood in its Burmese context.

3

A history of sleeping texts¹ and silent Buddhas²

- (ii) The *yaw"gi* emphasises 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti'*) and its fruit 'penetration' (*pa-di'wei-da'*), over 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti'*).
- (iii) Unordained *yaw"gis* may claim membership of the community of monks as 'monk of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-ha' than-ga*), i.e. by virtue of meditational activity and Buddhist practice, instead of 'monk of conventional truth' (*tha-mok-ti' than-ga*), i.e. membership by conventional ordination within the historical monastic lineage and scriptural learning.

The historical background to Burma sketched in chapter 1 showed the foreigner to be a significant force in Burma. In chapter 2 we noted how the foreigner was perceived by the Burmese as having influenced the changes in their Buddhism, resulting also in a change in the Burmese terminology for 'Buddhist' and 'Buddhism'. With the current chapter I briefly move away from the influence of the foreigner to consider a problem internal to Buddhism. The ideal in contemporary Burmese Buddhist practice is direct meditation without the intercession of concept or text. Yet the reality is that concept and text are extremely powerful, in fact indispensable, ways of communicating knowledge. This chapter shows how exponents of Buddhist practice have an axe to grind with those fellow Buddhists who are 'overtextualised'—i.e. those who emphasize scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti'*) over practice (*pa-di'pat-ti'*). But, sharing a joint history in the Buddhist texts and chronicles, and seeking to be remembered by future generations of Buddhists, means that they must come to terms with using text. In sum, contemporary Burmese traditions of Buddhist practice advocate atextual and aconceptual methods of meditation in the ideal, yet are in reality significantly bound to text and scriptural learning for their historical continuity.

Though this chapter deals with a debate internal to Buddhism it is not without parallels, and in the concluding chapter to this thesis I present an analogy between this tension and the tension

1 This reference to 'sleeping texts' is taken from a quote given later in this chapter from Htei" Hlaing (1981a: 12).

2 The translation of *pyil-sei-ka' bok-da*: see end-notes.

between the ideal of 'context' in the anthropology of Buddhism as against the Indological emphasis on 'text'.

On the practice tradition

The term *wi'pat-tha-na* may today be used to refer to a particular meditation method which is distinct from 'concentration' (*tha-ma-ha*), 'charity' (*da-na*) and 'morality' (*thi-la*), but when addressed as a historical tradition by historians who are exponents of such tradition, it would appear to be explained under the rubric of the more comprehensive concept of practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*).

Over the last decades one type of literature has enjoyed phenomenal growth, which may be referred to as 'practice literature' (*pa-di'pat-ti'sa-bei*). Many contemporary Burmese sources used to provide information about Buddhist practice indirectly, whether by listing the works some meditation teachers may have written, or by providing a summary of their lives.³ But this does not make them 'practice literature'. Many such works, certainly of the older type, include reference to personalities famed for Buddhist practice and their writings in the context of many other personalities and their works for whom Buddhist practice is not central. Buddhist practice, here, is not the main plot.

But in the 'practice literature', Buddhist practice is central to the text and structures it.

This large body of practice literature comprises many thousands of works, all written relatively recently (in the course of this century), including: biographical information on WM teachers, their preaching, various rhymes and devotional prayers, meditation centre yearbooks, and so forth. Of these, a few recent works bearing the title 'tradition-' or 'history of practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti tha-tha-na win*)⁴ make very popular reading in Burma, particularly among WM meditators. This new genre of Buddhist history comprises collections of biographies of monks and laymen famed for their meditation practice, two of which are analysed in chapter 7. Htei" Hlaing (1981a: i) defined practice history as concerned with, 'those who achieved trance (*zan*)

3 For example, 'history of scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti tha-tha-na win*) and 'history of literature' (*gan'da' win*) covers also writings of famous meditation teachers, but it does so as part of many other personalities and their writings, for whom Buddhist practice is not important. An early example of this is the (estimated) 17th century Burmese work *Gandhavamsa*, which deals with the early Pali Literature of Ceylon and Burma. Again, sometimes these are selected on a roughly defined regional basis, such as in Hla' Tha-mein (1961), which includes some short biographies of famous meditation teachers in the whole of Burma, and lists their written works. Sometimes these are oriented towards the lineage of a particular person, such as Hla' Baing (1967), which is indicated by the author as 'a collection of biographies of famous authors within the Le-di factional lineage, of which the first Le-di Hsa-ya-daw is head' (1967: na). But Buddhist practice is not their main theme.

4 The Government Burmese-Burmese Dictionary (MAA 1980: 184) gives 'tha-tha-na history' (*tha-tha-na tha-maing*) as the translation for *tha-tha-na win*.

and extraordinary faculties (*a-bein-nyan*),⁵ those enlightened⁶ (*ya-han"da*) and those on the sure path to enlightenment (*a-ri'ya*), and other special *yaw"gi* who, though not yet progressed to the path to enlightenment (*a-ri'ya*), nevertheless practised hard to achieve the path of enlightened (*a-ri'ya*).⁷

Two distinct types of practice history are identifiable. One type traces practice history regionally, of which 'Burma's tradition of Buddhist practice: Buddhist enlightened and special people' by Htei" Hlaing (1981a) and 'Hagiographies of Burma's enlightened and special people' by Tha-tha-na Wi'thok-di (1977), are typical examples. These provide an overall view of the history of meditational practice in Burma beginning with a very brief account of the Pyu period in the 10th century AD right up to the 1970s. A second type of practice history traces the history of a single WM teacher and his disciples, of which 'The Tradition of Practice of the Ma-ha-si' (Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha 1974) is a typical example. It starts with an extended description of the teacher's life and works, and goes on to give 186 brief biographies of individual pupils.

Such practice histories are unique among Buddhist histories in two important respects. First they are recent. They were published since the 1970s. Second, they reflect the concerns of a recently maturing and increasingly selfconscious WM tradition—concerns which are different from those addressed in the nine traditional types of history (*win*).⁷ The practice histories are devoted to the lives and experiences of specifically *Burmese* meditation practitioners, whereas the earlier forms of Buddhist history dwelt also on the lives of ancient Buddhists in India and Sri Lanka.⁸ Traditional histories described contemporary Burmese Buddhist history only after first devoting about one-third of their extent to events pertaining to the Buddha and his pupils

5 As described in the *A-bi'da-ma*, there are six such 'extraordinary faculties' (*a-bein-nyan*) which do not accompany pure WM, but could accompany dedicated concentration meditation (*tha-ma-hita*) or mixed concentration-WM. For more details on these faculties see chapter 6.

6 See end-notes, *a-ri'ya*.

7 *Win* is derived from *wun-tha'* (P. *vamsa*), i.e. 'race', 'lineage', 'tradition', 'dynasty', 'spiritual lineage', or 'history of persons or places'. The nine traditional categories of *win* include: (i) the lineage of the Buddha (*bok-da' win*); (ii) the lineage of the Buddha's relatives (*ma-ha win*); (iii) the lineage of kings (*ya-za win*); (iv) future events (*a-na-ga'ta' win*); (v) the lineage of the relics of the Buddha, silent Buddhas, and *ya-han"da* (*Da-hita da-tu' win*); (vi) the history of Sri Lanka (*di-pa' win*); (vii) the history of stupas and pagodas (*htu-pa' win*); (viii) the history of Bodhi trees (*baw"di' win*); and (ix) the history of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na win*). One might conceivably treat 'history of practice' as a sub-category of the (v) or (ix), but unlike these, practice histories do not characteristically take the Buddha's life as anchorage but start in Burma.

8 These early chronicles characteristically devoted about one-third to the development of Buddhism during the time of the Buddha and later in Sri Lanka, one-third to the development in ancient Burma, and only one-third to the development of contemporary Buddhism, whereas practice history devote almost two-thirds on this-century meditation masters.

in India, and then working their way gradually through events and lineages into Burmese history. But the practice histories skip all this; they start with Burma and the lion's share of their contents deal with Buddhist practice in 20th-century Burma (the Ma-ha-si history deals entirely with WM teachers in this century).⁹ A third characteristic is that WM takes a very prominent place. As noted in the introduction, the term 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) has a much larger meaning than WM; it also includes charity (*da-na*), morality (*thi-la*), and concentration (*tha-ma-di*) within its scope of reference. But all of these are a mere precondition to successful WM practice, and WM (more than any other Buddhist action) today is often presented in this kind of literature as the summum bonum of 'practice'. Indeed, the two concepts WM and 'practice' are frequently used interchangeably.¹⁰

The fourth characteristic of this new type of history is what this chapter seeks to investigate in more detail. This is the ambivalent attitude towards text and scholarly learning by its authors.¹¹ This ambivalence is shared by exponents of the practice tradition cutting right across monastic or sectarian boundaries. The most familiar opposition occurs under the traditional division between the two activities of 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) and 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*).

Practice without texts

In chapter 1 it was described how during the colonial period a radical change in outlook took place on the part of Burmese Buddhists, many of whom developed a distinct interest in meditation. As described by Htei" Hlaing (1981a: 12), a lay historian of practice, what Buddhists did was to put into practice hitherto 'silent' texts:

'From the British to the Independence Period 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) has overtaken 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*) in prominence and popularity these sleeping *ni'ke* books have—from

9 This geographical distinction between India and Burma is a modern one, and the Burmese sense of geography before colonial conquest was quite different. Burmese saw the geography of their own country in the light of Buddhist geography: Mt Popa near Pagan as the equivalent of Mt Meru in the centre of Jambudipa is just one example of this. With western education, their sense of geography has changed, and this too may play a role in the sense of separation of Burma from India found in the modern practice literature.

10 E.g. compare Thi-la-nan-da (1979: 9) with its English translation in Silanandabhivamsa (1982: 10), where Burmese *pa-di'pat* is translated into English as 'practical Vipassana'. Also, see end-notes ('WM Period') on the way Ko Lei" refers to the WM period as a 'practice period' (*pa-di'pat-ti' hkit*).

11 See endnote on 'WM and history'.

their place on a shelf at a library, or from being subject to worship while encased in a pagoda—moved to be read and studied even by little girls, and the *Da-ma-set-kyā*, *A-nat-la'lek-hka-na* and *Tha-di'pa-hlan Thok* have all become works which are now actually put into practice'.

This passage reveals how during the colonial period the hidden meanings of Buddhist texts had finally come to be understood; instead of being worshipped, preserved and displayed, these texts had now finally revealed their meanings to even uneducated simple people—'sleeping texts...are now actually put into practice... to be read... even by little girls....'¹²

Though in this way Buddhist practice historically gained the upperhand over scriptural learning, this did not signify a once-and-for-all victory for Buddhist practice. Text continues as an impediment to Buddhist practice: the study of books (*gan"da'*) is placed among the Ten Obstructions to Meditation.¹³ Teachers of practice must have a firm grounding for their—teachings in the scriptures, but their learning should not interfere with the method itself, which remain aconceptual and immediate. Pupil *yaw"gi* have no need to do scriptural learning. To repeat, as Sun"lun" (n.d.: 18) put it, WM 'is the elimination of concepts to penetrate to the real for the winning of knowledge'.¹⁴ Scriptural study (*gan"da'du-ra'*) and WM (*wi'pat-tha-na du-ra'*) are two different and largely incompatible burdens.¹⁵

With this alignment of *yaw"gi* to practice, it is not surprising to find that *yaw"gi* consider 'practice' as having the better 'flavour' over 'scriptural learning'. As Htei" Hlaing (1981a: 12) put it: 'the work of 'scriptural learning' is but the work of a young herder of cows, while 'practice' is like the owner of the cows, who gets to drink the milk ... from 'scriptural learning' we get to taste only one-tenth the flavour of the Buddha's teachings'.¹⁵

12 KN pointed out that this reference to 'sleeping texts' refers to more than just putting into practice what is in the texts. In his opinion, apart from the revival of a 'practice' tradition, the field of scriptural learning itself has been changed completely. The most important developments are: less emphasis being placed on learning the commentaries and sub-commentaries in favour of learning the 'real' texts such as the *a-bi'da-ma* and the five *ni'ke*; Pali grammar (*tha-da*) and poetry (*hsan"*) taking a back stage position in relation to active comprehension and application of the ideas and concepts of Buddhism; and, finally, less emphasis being placed on learning by rote alone, favouring instead logical explanations of cause and effect inter-relationships and how to apply the teachings in daily life. So the new emphasis on practice is but one kind of 'awakening of texts', its corollary being in the different way scriptural learning is now actually carried out. This new emphasis on practice and on understanding the deeper meanings of text is noticeable in the way scriptural learning exams are conducted today; now it takes up to five years of studies to achieve the *da-ma sa-ri'ya'* exam, whereas before it took only two years.

13 See Aw-ba-tha (1975: 360) and Dutt (1941: 216).

14 See end-notes 'WM and other knowledge'.

15 Similes involving cows are frequently used in communicating the nature of practice. For example, in *Wi'pat-tha-na ba-wa-na hnit-zaung-dwe* (Ba' Gyi Ngo 1979: 13) we also find reference to the cow herder who comes along with the owner, but never gets to drink the milk, 'although you may preach the *ti'pi'ta-ka'*, which can bring the benefits of *neik-ban*, 'if you are someone who forgets to practise, whatever you do, you will not get to taste the flavour of the Path and Fruition'. In Ma-ha-si (1980d: 115) the successful meditator, once reaching the stage of *thaw"da-ban*, is compared to 'a milch-cow which keeps her whole attention on her newly-born calf, although she cannot help but munch grass all the time.'

Yet compare this with the opposite argument on the part of those favouring scriptural learning over practice, such as Hpa-ya¹⁶hpyu (1928: 321), who argued that 'flavour' is inherent in the scriptures themselves, 'the big flavours of *at-hta'ya'tha'*, *da-ma'ya'tha'*, and *wi'mok-ti'ya'tha'*, are all derived from the *Thok, Wi'ni*" and *A-bi'da-ma* texts.' He claimed scriptural learning was more important because without it there can be no 'practice' or 'penetration': 'Scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti'*) is the chief bull of the herd responsible for guarding the lineage, and without which there can be no female cow guarding her practice (*pa-di'pat-ti'*)' (1928: 222).

It is difficult to separate the two—scriptural learning and practice—as they exist by virtue of one another; cream may taste better, but there is no cream without the union between the cow and the bull. Yet it is quite clear that there is room for argument about their relative importance. In the practice tradition, Buddhism is primarily about 'doing', not 'learning' or 'studying', the teachings of the Buddha, but the reverse opinion is often held outside this tradition.¹⁶ In short, practice and scriptural learning have perpetuated in the course of this century as synonyms for alternative and competing Buddhist traditions.

On transformation of Buddhist knowledge

In order to appreciate Htei" Hlaing's observation about the rebirth of practice in this century, and, indeed, to appreciate the significance of the tradition of practice as a whole, the meaning of one Burmese term for Buddhism, namely *bok-da'tha-tha-na* or simply *tha-tha-na*, must be explained.¹⁷

There are a wide range of dictionary definitions of this term. In the Indological tradition we find *sasana* defined as: order, message, teaching, doctrine of the Buddha (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921-25: 707); order, command, message, epistle, instruction, discipline, scripture, Buddhist religion or dispensation (Childers 1909: 465). In the Burmese dictionary we find *tha-tha-na* to mean: 'the noble Buddha's instructions', 'the period during which there is practice according to the noble Buddha's laws' (MAA 1980: 184). *Tha-tha-na* is also additionally widely used to include:

16 Knowledge generated by WM is accorded a unique status. Aw-ba-tha (1975) distinguished between three types of knowledge: (i) the kind of knowledge derived from hearing; (ii) the kind of knowledge derived from planning; and (iii) the kind of 'noble and special knowledge' attained by practicing 'concentration-WM *ta-ya'*" (p253; see also p344). WM knowledge is language independent.

17 Surprisingly, King (1964, 1980) and Nash (1965) do not refer to the important term *tha-tha-na* at all. Spiro (1970: 32) referred to it only once in his work on Buddhism, translating it inadequately as 'the doctrine of the Buddha'. Smith (1965: 148) internalised some of the complexities of the term when he said: 'As sometimes used, the word *sasana* means not only 'doctrine' (the primary meaning), but the Sangha, laity, and all of the practices associated with the faith. The closest English equivalent to so broad a term as Buddha *sasana* is 'Buddhism'.

But *tha-tha-na* is but one of three Burmese terms for Buddhism, the others being *bok-da'da-ma'* and *bok-da'ba-tha*. These terms are used in subtly different ways which will be explained in the next chapter. Suffice to note here that, while the terms *tha-tha-na* and *da-ma'* are used in other Buddhist cultures, the term *bok-da'ba-tha* would appear to be a unique Burmese reference to Buddhism, and that the connotations of this latter term are considerably wider, including the Buddhist laity and Buddhist culture.

the *da-ma'*, Buddhist persons by ordination or action (monks, novices, monastic helpers, devotees, meditators, etc), and their property, beliefs, teachings and practices.

The term has a dynamic quality. It is often said that 'the *tha-tha-na* is being established' (*tha-tha-na te nei de*), 'flourishes' (*htun" ka" nei de*), or 'propagates' (*pyan' pwa" nei de*). Burmese Buddhists sometimes refer to 'doing *tha-tha-na*'¹⁸ which refers to any action that can be interpreted as aspiring to support the *tha-tha-na*—it is used perhaps inappropriately to refer to the prescription of medicines, so as eventually to renovate a pagoda with the proceeds, which in turn would generate the necessary merit and prestige to achieve a more ambitious goal such as supernatural powers and an extended life for the individual. So 'to do *tha-tha-na*' need not necessarily mean to carry Buddhist teachings out to others, or to convert others to Buddhism, though it has come to mean this also, especially after the strong-hold missionaries had in the early days over the scope of meaning of Burmese terms in the translation between Burmese and English.

The *tha-tha-na* is divided into three distinct divisions, namely: 'scriptural learning Buddhism' (*pa-ri'yat-ti' tha-tha-na*), which represents the holy texts and spoken instructions, and their study; 'practice Buddhism' (*pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na*), which represents religious duties, meditational practice, and moral conduct in accordance with the Buddha's teachings; and 'penetration Buddhism' (*pa-di'wei-da' tha-tha-na*), which refers to penetrating or piercing, i.e. one is firmly on the path to enlightenment (*a-ri'ya*).

These are 'doable' verbs—i.e. one can 'exercise practice', 'do scriptural learning', 'attain penetration'. But they are dynamically interrelated also, as the following analogy of the transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupils makes clear:

The school teacher instructs the students to study carefully the written works. The students try hard and pass the exams. The teacher's instructions resemble the scriptures (*Ti'pi'ta-ka*).¹⁹ The efforts by the pupils resemble practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*). Passing the exams resembles realisation (*pa-di'wei-da*). In this example, it is the teacher's teachings that are the instructions, but the pupils' efforts are no longer the instructions, but dedicated exercise—following up and putting into practice the teacher's instructions. Passing the exam is no longer instruction either, but the quality of knowledge coming to fulfillment as the result of practice which was itself no longer instruction. In this manner, scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti' tha-tha-na*), which is known as the *Ti'pi'ta-ka* and which is the Buddha's noble spoken words, is religious (*tha-tha-na*) instruction. As for practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*), this is the following up in accordance with the scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti' tha-tha-na*). As for realisation (*pa-di'wei-da*), this is no less than 'knowledge of the path' (*mek-nyan*) which comes out of such practice. This must be heeded. (MSK Vol 13: 89)²⁰

18 Judson (1953: 1018), the Baptist missionary author of the earliest comprehensive Burmese-English Dictionary, interpreted this rather narrowly as meaning 'to carry on missionary operations'

19 See end-notes, *Ti'pi'ta-ka*.

20 KN gave me the following example of the interrelationship between the three types of *tha-tha-na*: 'The example of the river in a jungle is appropriate. You are in the jungle where there are a lot of man-eating tigers, lions, etc, which makes it very dangerous. You have to pass a river which is also dangerous because of animals such as crocodiles. But there is a life-boat to use, which is scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti*). Your effort by rowing this boat is just like *pa-di'pat-ti*' (WM). Having reached the other side of the river is *pa-di'wei-da*'.

So *tha-tha-na* refers at one extreme to the state of knowledge-outside-man—i.e. the scriptures embodying the Buddha's teachings—versus at the other extreme knowledge-inside-man—i.e. its realisation and penetration. 'Practice' here is the agent responsible for transformation from one to the other.

Burmese Buddhists have a sophisticated awareness of the nature of Buddhist knowledge and its limitations. First, it must be conveyed through history in the form of text. The Buddhist texts serve, as Ko Lei" (1986: 2) put it, as receptacles by means of which a line of workers convey earth:

All that the Buddha taught forms the subject matter and substance of the Pali Canon, which is divided into these three divisions called Pitakas—literally baskets. Hence Tipitaka means three baskets or three separate divisions of the Buddha's Teaching. Here the metaphor 'basket' signifies not so much the function of 'storing up' anything put into it, as its use as a receptacle in which things are handed on or passed on from one to another like carrying away of earth from an excavation site by a line of workers.

Though conveyance of knowledge through text ensures smooth transmission, more likely to endure historically than extra-textual methods of transmission, this does not mean that it is not subject to distortion. Periodically, Synods have to be organised to purify the texts, and they are not an immutable way of storing knowledge. But more important, we find that text is transformed by virtue of transmission in history. This transformation is on the one hand conceived of as a historically unique event, as in Htei" Hlaing's observation that sleeping texts encased in pagodas and libraries have in the last century come to be put into practice, while on the other, it is, as suggested in the teacher-pupil example above, a historically repetitive event taking place generationally and periodically during transmission between teacher and pupil.

On Buddhist practice and time

Among many other factors affecting the *tha-tha-na*,²¹ time is one of the most important. In the public domain²² there are four well-known and somewhat similar explanations of a gradual decline of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) with time.²³ Prophecies of 'the 5,000 year life-span of Buddhist teachings' (*Tha-tha-na nga" daung*)²⁴ are postulated in the form of a single cycle of 5 x 1,000 years commencing from the time of the Buddha.²⁵ Three such prophecies hold that the grades of penetration achievable are reduced in standard every 1,000 years after the Buddha's enlightenment.²⁶ A fourth scheme postulates, but without referring to the 5,000 year time limit, '5 ways of disappearance of the Buddhist teachings (*tha-tha-na*)', beginning with the disappearance of canonical texts (*pa-ri'yat-ti*), practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*), realisation (*pa-di'wei-da*); the 8 utensils of the monks (*lein-ga' tha-tha-na*), and, finally, the relics (*da-tu' tha-tha-na*), until there is little trace of the Buddha or his teachings left in the world.²⁷

But the lifespan of the *tha-tha-na* is also correlated with the lifespan of humans.²⁸ First, the *tha-tha-na* can not be 'born' unless human lifespan is between 100 and 100,000 years long; lifespans shorter or longer do not allow a Buddha to arise. At a time when lifespans are shorter than 100 years, too many defilements (greed, anger and craving) are present which cloud unaided understanding of the true conditions of existence; yet with a lifespan of over 100,000 years the symptoms of impermanence and non-self so essential to the teachings are hardly evident. While life-spans are shorter than 100 years, as in the present era, the transmission of a Buddha's teachings is possible, but there is an inevitable decline over the centuries.

Second, human lifespan decreases with the advance of the *tha-tha-na*. The Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (BTNA 1980b: 80) wrote:

'It is said that the span of life among human beings is now decreasing by one year every century. 2,500 years have elapsed since the time of the Buddha and so we have to assume that the span of

- 21 The *tha-tha-na* is affected also by climate and country (e.g. in England it is difficult to set up and operate a monastery, and if monks are inhibited, so is the *tha-tha-na*), the *kan* (*kamma*) of individuals, the state of the country in respect of the Three Disasters (famine, war and disease), the state of knowledge of people at the time, etc.
- 22 A different explanation is current specifically in the practice tradition which I shall come to later.
- 23 King (1980: 119) referred to this deterioration of the *tha-tha-na* with time as 'the Evil Age Motif'.
- 24 Aw-ba-tha (1975) gives 'Three ways of demarking the 5,000 year *tha-tha-na* and the 5 periods'. He quite clearly states that these ways are not included in the Pali Canon (*Pa-li'daw*), though they are present in the Commentaries (*a-hia'ka-hia*). KN held that reference to this 5,000 year period was not included in the Sixth Synod.
- 25 We shall see that in the practice tradition there is preference for a two cycles of 5 x 500 years view which allows an optimistic upturn mid-way.
- 26 See end-notes, 'Enlightenment Periods'.
- 27 This scheme is also quoted in Ma-ha-da-ma' (1931: 234). KN points out that there are some traces of the Buddha's teachings even 'outside' the *tha-tha-na*. Some entities who assisted the Buddha to overcome threats are still being reborn. (see 'Eight Victories' or *aung-gyin" shii pa"*).
- 28 Later on in this chapter, but in more detail in chapter 7, we shall see how there is yet another correlation between lifespan of man and that of the *tha-tha-na*: how the different types of *tha-tha-na* are also involved at different stages in the lifespan of the monk. It was held that scriptural learning should be practised under 40 years old, teaching scriptural learning takes place between the ages of 40-60, and practice (meditation) would take place after the age of 60.

human life has fallen off by 25 years. This assumption is plausible since today only a few people live up to 75 years. Man's life-span is likely to be reduced to 10 years in the next 6,500 years. It is said that by that time the delicacies in the human world such as butter, honey, etc will have disappeared...People will no longer avoid killing, stealing... Immoral acts will become rampant...'

So there is a corresponding decline between the lifespan of the *tha-tha-na* and that of man; these are both linked to a decline in the moral state of humanity. At the time of the Buddha, human lifespan was long, well over a hundred years, because people had good morality and made a lot of merit, which was in turn conducive to a long and healthy life. As the lifespan of the Buddha's teachings grew it deteriorated, and with a decline in the morality of humanity, so also human lifespan gradually decreased—people became less moral and married earlier in life—until after 5,000 years (approx AD 4,500) human lifespan will be less than ten years old. This correlation between man's and Buddhism's lifespan has sometimes been expressed in a precise mathematical manner as the Ma-ha-si did above, with man losing one year in average lifespan per century as we are moving away from the time of the Buddha. But meditation is also considered difficult when lifespans are too long or too short, in particular in the upper heavens, where lifespans are too long and pleasures abound, and in the lower hells, where suffering is too much to realise knowledge. Because of man's moral debasement and the disappearance of the scriptures, enlightenment becomes more difficult to achieve as the dispensation of the Buddha progresses, until it is impossible during the latter part of the *tha-tha-na*.

So, underlying this link between the lifespan of the Buddha's teachings and man's length and quality of life is the need to work increasingly harder to achieve the same standard of practice and state of penetration. First, there is a need for more dedicated scriptural learning. At the time of the Buddha there was no need to perform study of the texts because the Buddha was there to teach in person. After his demise the study and memorisation of the Buddha's instructions preoccupied Buddhist endeavours because of it had to be continuously memorised in order to preserve it in time. But such became increasingly difficult because of the demands laity and government began to put on the type of learning monks do; in particular, the exams that they were expected to pass.²⁹ But while scriptural learning became somewhat less demanding with the introduction of the printing press and their easy replication of the scriptures, much more 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti'*) was thought to be needed today to achieve the same state of 'penetration' (*pa-di'wei-da'*) as at the time of the Buddha. At the time, in the presence of the Buddha, knowledge penetration could be achieved instantaneously, but today 'penetration' can not be achieved

29 KN pointed out that the examination systems have nothing intrinsically to do with 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ni'yat-ti'*), and encourage the studying for 'worldly pride' to meet the requirements of lay sponsors and fellow monks. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw is alleged to have said that 'exams kill students'. The syllabus becomes too narrow, and so does the pupil's knowledge. The examination system came to be stressed during the reign of Min'don in the last century, but during the preceding Ava Period there would appear to have been little stress on examining.

except by exceptionally serious, hard work through 'practice'. Therefore, unlike the time of the Buddha, where penetration could be instantaneous, today penetration has no continuity but through practice, and practice has no continuity except through the scriptures.

So in the schemes above, disappearance of scriptural learning risks the disappearance of practice, until penetration becomes impossible.³⁰ This makes scriptural learning important to all Buddhists, whether meditators or non-meditators.³¹

Many analogies are used to describe the interdependence of practice with scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti*):³²

Every tree depends upon its roots for the growth and flourishing of branches, leaves, flowers and fruits etc [root/stem=scriptural learning; branches & leaves=practice; flowers & fruits=penetration].

The water of the lake can exist only where there are bank-walls. The water lilies also can spring up into bloom only when there is water in it [bank-walls=scriptural learning; water=practice; lilies=penetration].

Though there are many bullocks, if there is no cow that can breed the calf, there cannot be continuity of its race [cow=scriptural learning; calf=practice; bullock=penetration].

One can remember the gold-pot hidden in the ground only if there is a mark of letters or stone script to refer to the place [mark=scriptural learning; effort=practice; gold-pot= penetration].

- 30 It is interesting that there is always a note of optimism on public international occasions, such as during the Sixth Buddhist Council, when the following was proclaimed as recorded in English by Hitei Hlaing (1981b: first few pages) in his book on Sri Lankan holy ones:
'You know, I think, that our Sasana consists of three divisions, namely Pariyatti, Patipatti and Pativedha. The first two of these three are still to be found in a somewhat satisfactory condition in other Theravadin countries, whereas with regard to the third division they lack it. But here in Burma, I believe and boldly express my personal view, there are not only Pariyatti and Patipatti in a perfect condition, but also Pativedha Sasana too is still existing and so, I believe, there are Ariya-puggalas [those on the path to enlightenment] still in this country' (17.5.1954-56).'
- 31 One might argue that *pa-di'pat-ti* has continuity through the relics and the pagodas (and in Thailand through amulets) apart from texts. Though this may be true in that relics of holy ones (who became holy ones through 'practice') are widely treasured for their powers, they only convey power and protection against evil, but do not convey the techniques for meditation to others. The importance of 'scriptural learning' is further evident in that no Buddhist Synod can be held unless there is at least one monk who can recite the whole of the Buddhist scriptures from memory, a considerable feat because the Buddhist canon has sometimes been estimated as sixteen times the size of the bible. According to the Ma-ha-si biography the Sixth Buddhist Synod held in Rangoon was accepted in Thailand because there was one Burmese monk—the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'da-ra' Hsa-ya-daw*—capable of this.
- 32 Examples taken from Panna Dipa (1981). I met this author on several occasions: he has a meditation centre in Rangoon.

Scriptural learning before practice

Historians of Buddhist practice find the history^{of} practice to be ancient, dating back to the time of the Buddha, yet they also find their history at the same time to be very recent, in that there is much discontinuity in 'practice' since the Buddha's time. As Ko Lei" (1980: ix-x) put it:

When investigating the sprouting and thriving of the Buddha's teachings (*tha-tha-na*) from its first arrival in Burma until the present, among the three realms of the teachings (*tha-tha-na*), it is only possible to easily know about scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti*)...prepared by the *Than-ga* in various districts...but much of 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) and penetration (*pa-di'wei-da*) remain hidden.³³

Two types of explanation are evoked to explain this 'hiding' of WM practice. First WM's place in history is explained by a prophecy somewhat different, more optimistic, from the ones considered before. Instead of positing an inevitable linear decline the way the previous prophecies did, here there is an upturn in Buddhist practice.³⁴ The Buddhist teachings (*tha-tha-na*) last over two cycles of 2,500 years after the Buddha's demise, making a total of 5,000 years, in which the quality of Buddhist action deteriorates from predominance in the popularity of WM gradually down to predominance in the popularity of the act of charity, to make place for an upturn during this century with WM. These two cycles, the first starting with the Buddha's demise, and the second starting in 1956 at the end of the Sixth Buddhist Synod, 2,500 years after this event, are subdivided into five periods of 500 years each, during which different types of Buddhist action prevail: in the 'age of purity' or 'age of WM' (*wi'mok-ti/wi'pat-tha-na hkit*) WM

33 Some have characterised practice along with scriptural learning as adequately present in the world, but have instead argued that penetration 'is in a state of deficiency' (Thi-la-nan-da 1982: 131). But in the same work (1982: 172) it is noted that 'In Ceylon, before the propagation of *vipassanā* meditation by the Mahasi Sayadaw, *vipassanā* had nearly been obliterated'.

34 Mendelson (1975: 276) does not appear to have been aware of this double cycle view of history when he said the following:
'In planning the Sangayana, the Burmese seem to have associated two events which did not necessarily fit together logically and historically: the attainment of their own Independence and the Revival. In traditional Theravada Buddhism no reason is in fact given for the belief that the 2,500th anniversary of the Buddha would see a revival in the Doctrine. On the contrary, the traditional feeling had always been that the Doctrine would inevitably decay and be forgotten, that man would become more and more debased as a result of the loss of the Doctrine, and that only after a great destruction of the existing world would a new Golden Age come with a new Buddha, the Maitreya, to begin the teaching all over again. In Burmese history, roughly from the time of King Bodawpaya onward, we can observe the interplay of two contradicting beliefs: one is the inevitable decline, and another in the nativistic and revivalistic forces that a messianic dispensation would be granted much sooner than the texts would have it...'

I do not know which texts Mendelson referred to here, but evidently Buddhism is not always seen in terms of a linear 'inevitable decline', but rather in terms of cyclical movements, and so there seems, in the eyes of the authors in the 'tradition of practice' no contradiction between the Independence revival and the 2x5 periods.

What Mendelson was no doubt referring to are the various schemes noted earlier, namely those in which the 5,000 years of the Buddha's dispensation is divided in 5x1,000 year periods (also referred to by King (1980: 117)).

prevailed³⁵; in the 'concentration' period (*tha-ma-hta' hkit*) 'concentration' meditation and various *zan* oriented methods prevailed; in the 'morality' period (*thi-la' hkit*) perfection of morality prevailed; in the *thok-tan* (*sutta*) period 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti'*) prevailed; and finally, in the 'charity' period (*da-na' hkit*) meritorious donations prevailed with many pagodas and monasteries having been built.³⁶ With the last charity period gradually tapering off in the course of this century since the deposition of the royalty, there was the beginning of a renewed 2,500 year cycle in Buddhist history, beginning with a further 500 year WM period. Hence, this century (from 1956 to be exact) represents a renewed beginning of WM popularity, which is to give place to concentration after 500 years, and so on.

The second explanation of WM's discontinuity in Buddhist history is not phrased in terms of such an elaborate chronology: it is not a prophesy much as a retrospective generalisation in the form of a metaphor of swelling water. Htei" Hlaing (1981a: 12) sees the strengthening of 'practice' as a gradual transformation from the static silence of a puddle into the roaring stream of a wild river.³⁷

Up to the beginning of the Kon"baung Period [1752-1885] 'practice' (*pa-di'ba'*) was merely in existence, and was like a few puddles of water here and there, but it did not have any strength to flow. During the later part of the Kon"baung Period, there were the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw [1798-1890] and (Hpon"daw-gyi" U") Thi-la' [1832-1907]. During this period the water began to flow little by little into a creek, but due to its small size it did not have the force to cut its way through the dense and high forests and mountains. Then there were the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw [1846-1923], Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw [1871-1931] and the Mo'hnyin" Hsa-ya-daw [1872-1964]. In their time 'practice' began to flow and gather strength, and it changed from a little creek into a big river. The strength and the sounds of the flowing water went on to be felt by the whole country... After independence in 1948, the flow became as strong as rivers like the Irrawaddi, and with *hsa-ya-daws* taking responsibility for 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti'*)—Tha-hton Zei-da-wun Hsa-ya-daw [1870-1955], Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw [1877-1952], Kan-ni Hsa-ya-daw [1879-1966], Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw [1895-1977], Mo"kok Hsa-ya-daw [1899-1962], Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw [1904-1982]—the dignity of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) was advanced'. [dates changed to Western calendar: some dates added for clarity.]

These two views of the historical unfolding of WM are not the same: one proposes an exact scheme of repetitive history involving two cycles of five eras during which different types of

35 See end-notes, 'WM period'.

36 See end-notes on 'WM and history'.

37 A similar statement is made in Hla' Baing (1976: 63):

'The *Sa-du' Bon-mi'ka' Mek-gin Ma'ha Tha-di'pa-htan* practices were in competition with the First Zei-da-wun Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw...According to the rhyme "The beginning of *wi'pat-tha-na* is the lake", after the work on *wi'pat-tha-na* named *Gam-bi-ra Gam-bi-ra' Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'* by the first Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw (the lake) came out, during the period of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw where many *di-pa-ni* began to be composed, *wi'pat-tha-na* works and the *pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na* began to become brilliant.' [The First Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw was (U") Za-ga-ra (1822-1893).]

The association of 'practice' with water is a familiar theme also outside this practice literature. In one instance it is used to show up the importance of scriptural learning instead:

'Only if there is an embankment can water be supported; only if there is a support can there be water, and can the water flow through the five holes. The reason for the establishment of the *pa-di'pat-ti'* and *pa-di'wei-da' tha-tha-na* lies with *pa-ri'yat-ti'*. In this example, the embankment is like *pa-ri'yat-ti'*, the water like *pa-di'pat-ti'*, and the five holes are like *pa-di'wei-da'* which is the *zan*, *a-bein-nyan*, *tha-ma-bat* and *mek-hpo'* (Hpa-ya'hpyu Hsa-ya-daw 1928: 323).

religious action were popular, while the other treats it as a unique historical event, distinguishing between a past of preferred scriptural learning and a present of increasing preference for practice. What do they have in common? They both view the paths of development of scriptural learning and practice as going different ways: while scriptural learning monopolised the past (and continues to co-exist in the present), practice is coming to be increasingly popularly sought in the present era.

As already noted, scriptural learning plays a crucial role in providing the historical continuity and anchorage which the practice tradition itself lacks. This is recognised by Ko Lei" (1980: 555-56) who, after evoking the cyclical view, proceeds to refer to 'scriptural learning' as the thread of continuity throughout the five periods:

'In the present purity period, path and fruition of the Buddhist laws (*ta-ya*") can be achieved: it is a period of meditation in which, like the time when the Buddha became Enlightened, by applying oneself to the three disciplines of morality, concentration and wisdom the happiness of the path and the attainment of fruition may be had. It is a period of meditation, a WM period... The WM period declined after 500 years, and WM drowned while a storm of darkness appeared. Ignorance overspread and the drowning lasted for 2,000 years. But though there had been no success in meditation, scriptural learning remained.

How silent Buddhas began to roar

We have so far concluded that practice and penetration have no continuity of their own apart from scriptural learning. The different forms of Buddhist history (including practice history) are all ultimately dependent on scriptural learning. Yet there is a contradiction; how can practice be claimed by its historians to have found continuity in this century, if it has no continuity of its own separate from scriptural learning? For even if you wish to meditate you must follow your teacher's instructions about morality and techniques, and this too comes under the rubric of scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti*').

The practice literature suggests two ways in which practice achieved a degree of continuity. The first way is by means of reversing the tendency to practise in seclusion, and to come out into the open. As the (monk) biographer of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw suggested, practice began to roar at the point where 'silent Buddhas' began to break their silence and personal isolation from society by entering into the field of teaching and preaching to the masses:

'It is not that back in the history of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) there were no noble ones devoted to practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*) before us. Limiting ourselves to those venerable ones closest to us in time, there were: the Kin"taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw, the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw [1786-1860], (U") Thi-la' Hsa-ya-daw [1833-1907] and the Min"gun" Zei-da-wun Hsa-ya-daw [1868-1955]. It has been recorded in the Buddhist (*tha-tha-na*) historical accounts that previous Venerable Hsa-ya-daws practised (*pa-di'pat-ti*) successfully and prodigiously. There have been, but these Venerable ones were like silent Buddhas (*pyit-sei-ka' bok-da*), practicing sufficiently for themselves, and amongst them cannot be found one who became as famous across the globe as the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw [1904-1982]'. (Thi-la-nan-da 1979: Pref. p.i)

Ko Lei" (1980: ix-x) confirms this early 'silence' of practice from his unsuccessful experiences in his painstaking quest for historical information on early practice:

The author holds the opinion that the noble ones of olden times were in the habit of practicing WM in solitude in the forests... they clenched the Buddhist laws (*ta-ya*) they found to their chests and cut all their links with the world. That is why nothing is known about these people... it is very difficult to know about the life histories, events and teacher-pupil successions pertaining to those noble ones who in the past nourished the realisation of Buddhist Truth (*pa-di'wei-da*) through the practice of meditation'.

A second answer is provided by Ko Lei" when he advocated the recovery of the 'history of practice' (1980: xii) by means of the recent textualisation of modern WM:³⁸

The people who still remember the teachers' lineages, which are the fountain heads of the various present-day meditation works, are still alive, and they are preparing various writings such as biographies of their teachers, their methods of meditation instructed by their religious teachers and their own experiences of satisfaction of these methods. There is no longer any need to fear that this material on meditation will be lost in the way it was in olden times. I believe that what is needed is to elaborate and complete these writings now.

In sum, on the one hand, the silence of practice was broken by previously 'silent' meditating monks 'going public' through preaching and teaching; but, on the other hand, it was also broken by recording and textualising this—the events, its personalities, their teachings and so forth—so that people without teachers (i.e. future generations and people in non-Buddhist lands) could refer back to it.

So the way the tradition of practice is finding continuity in the modern era means it has come full circle. First, it was a practical tradition actively taught face to face at the time of the Buddha 2,500 years ago. Second, it turned into a scriptural tradition in the form of the canon and early commentaries in which practice was translated into text. Third, it was translated in Burma back into a practical tradition at the end of the last/beginning of this century. Fourth, it is being translated back into a contemporary Burmese textual tradition of practice. Meanwhile it has continuously undergone translation, largely invisibly, from scriptural learning into practice by individual forest practitioners in relative silence.

Practice transmission

To say that practice only found continuity through preaching and textualising would not do justice to the efforts of Burmese biographers in tracing teacher-lineages, which have a form of continuity of their own. Teacher-pupil lineages are crucial to the historical continuity of all Buddhist teachings, including the tradition of practice. If one wants to teach 'true' Buddhism, one must be able to produce a record of sanction through evidence of continuity in lineage.³⁹

38 KN here points out that both authors—Ko Lei" and the author of the Ma-ha-si biography preface—present the early meditator monks as being selfish, whereas they were not necessarily. At the time, monks were more secretive about methods in fear of breaching the *Wi'ni*"; for claiming to have a good method means that one has had success with it—this constitutes a claim to some form of enlightenment as a result. This, rather than the principle of 'secretiveness' is why there was perhaps little written down at the time, and why teaching occurred in the context of private relationships rather than open groups.

39 See end-note on *Hsa-ya sin zet*.

Biographies in the tradition of practice are unusual in that, alongside the descriptions of teachers' lineages (*hsa-ya a-sin a-hset*) found in monk's biographies of whatever tradition or sect, they describe a new type of 'lineage of practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti' hsa-ya sin hset*). The conventional lineage corresponds to the lineage of preceptors at ordination and those teachers subsequently visited in the course of attaining knowledge of the scriptures and commentaries, but the 'practice lineage' corresponds to monks and laymen linked by their common interest in the practice of meditation and the transmission of its methodology irrespective of conventional ordination or scriptural study. The conventional lineage tends to document the links between a monk and his teachers during his early career, while the practice lineage usually describes the monk's links developed later in his career once a basis in scriptural learning has been achieved.⁴⁰

There are some crucial differences between these two lineages. The ordination/scriptural learning lineage is based on links through inheritance between generations of monks who ordained and taught their pupils formally, while the practice lineage is more of a spiritual link through symbolic classification based on *right action*, namely through WM practice. This has implications for the type of people who qualify for inclusion. While the scriptural learning lineage, being based on ordination, comprises only monks, the practice lineage, being based on meditation, includes also unordained persons. Within the practice lineage founded by the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw we find such lay disciple-teachers as (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" and (U") Ba' Hkin. Also, within the lineage founded by the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw are included lay persons such as (U") San Dun, (U") Chit Aung, (U") Htun", and (U") Myat Kyaw. Of course, monks teaching meditation are members of both lineages. This classification of unordained meditators as members of a lineage consisting predominantly of monks has some interesting implications for their use of language. In chapters 2 and 5 we find that emphasis on meditational practice, not scriptures, as the real Buddhist tradition, leads some lay meditators to speak of themselves as 'monks of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-hta' beik-hku*) with the knowledge and tacit acceptance—often even positive encouragement—of their teaching monks. These lay *yaw"gi* sometimes go as far as employing monastic vocabulary among each other, a vocabulary normally reserved for reference to monks.⁴¹ In this debate the ideal of unity of the Sangha is not broken: the lay *yaw"gi*, taking the ideal of practice to its limits, may conceive of him/herself, along with the ordained monk, as a member of 'the' *than-ga*.⁴²

40 As we shall see in the case of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, these two lineages—the scriptural and the practice lineages—may join together a few generations up.

41 KN found this usage of monastic vocabulary among lay *yaw"gi* to be crossing the threshold of acceptability. This issue will be further explored in chapter 5 on the meditation centre.

42 It is for this reason that I have decided not to follow the references by King (1980: 120) and Gombrich (1983: 20) to WM as 'lay meditation', because the adjective 'lay' is evidently highly deceptive here. Nor is 'lay meditation' the way its Burmese practitioners call it—it is rather 'applying oneself to the *da-ma*' (*ta-ya" a" htok thi*).

Another important feature of the practice lineage is that it is widely conceived as more vulnerable to dissolution and disappearance in history than the ordination/scriptural learning lineage. It is vulnerable for three reasons. First, teaching of meditation is highly individualistic in two respects. On the one hand, there is considerable individual input and modification depending on the personality, experience, and extent of knowledge of the aspiring teacher. On the other hand, methods are often tailored to the specific requirements of individual meditators. These two combine to make meditation methodology and tradition itself in flux, which also explains the enormous proliferation of meditation techniques in Burma. Second, because the practice tradition is continuously evolving in this manner, the criteria for succession and lineage, not being based on ordination, has never been clearly formulated. This means that meditation centres have difficulty recruiting successors over more than two or three generations, in particular those centres run by laymen. This explains also the state of disrepair of many meditation centres after two or less generations.⁴³ A third reason is that while scriptural learning can be tested, practice cannot. There is no universally accepted acid test for achievements in practice in the way this exists in the field of scriptural learning, where there are exams to pass and public titles to be gained. It is not possible to establish whether someone has achieved enlightenment or not, and, because there is also no objective measure of success amongst one's pupils, one does not know whether one is a good teacher in the tradition of practice or not.

While the ordination/scriptural learning lineage is long, the practice lineage is relatively short, a few generations at most, with frequent interruptions, and its history full of loose ends. 'Transmission of WM,' as one meditating nun expressed it to me, 'is like the transmission of tea—you need a tea-cup (the receptacle of scriptural learning) before you can drink it'. Or, 'transmission of WM between generations is like the Burmese roller bird (*hnget-hka*)' which moves forward along the ground by hopping up and down'—i.e. transmission of WM is not a solid straight-line of continuity, but a dynamic movement of continuous enforced translation of Buddhist knowledge into a medium which can convey it into the future for reconstruction.

The scriptural learning-practice contradiction

Is there no contradiction, we may ask, between the idea that the silence of the Buddhas with regard to meditation practice was broken through textualization, and the idea first expounded, namely that scriptural learning inhibits WM practice and that the practice lineage runs a different course from the scriptural lineage?

43 For example, the meditation centre of Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" was allowed to lapse, because his pupils seek their own glory as teachers and go on to teach elsewhere.

First, most WM teachers do a lot of scriptural learning to clarify difficult issues for the meditator, as do many of their students. Also, the organisations most strongly supporting WM, such as the BTNA, also strongly support scriptural learning. With scholarship as the only reliable medium of transmission of WM knowledge, presentation of WM to the outside world is still closely bound up with scholarship: the public test of truth of Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw's methods, and those of other modern meditation teachers, when investigated by the national monastic committee (*Than-ga' Ma-ha Na-ya-ka' A-hpwe*), is not on their own terms, on the basis of efficacy of teaching or inducing 'otherworldly knowledge' in pupils, but on external terms, namely to what extent the methods conform with those of the scriptures and commentaries.

But more particularly, *yaw*"gis are building up their own textual tradition based on descriptions of the lives and lineages of contemporary teachers, and WM is no longer solely a practice tradition, but also has become a textual one. While WM is quite different from Zen, what Suzuki said about the Japanese Zen tradition may be related to this Burmese practice tradition also:⁴⁴ 'Zen claims to be a specific transmission outside the scripture and to be altogether "independent of verbalism", but it is Zen masters who are most talkative and most addicted to writings of all sorts.' (D.T. Suzuki quoted in Walpola Rahula 1978a: 20)

There are evidently problems with such textualization of practice: while in this century practice 'roars' and finds its expression unlocked in all sorts of ways (building of meditation centres, training of teachers and writing of books), this development carries with it the seeds of the very silence so abhorred above. Increasingly there is conflict between the ideal of WM transmission through personal meditational experience, and WM transmission through its traces and expressions—through the socio-political and institutional realities of its organisation. Indeed, the proclaimed ideal of personal practice through personal experience rather than scriptural learning is being compromised by its increasing institutionalization and textualization. Text here therefore cuts both ways: on the one hand, in its role as a dynamic vehicle of transmission and history, it conveys historical knowledge into the future by means of which ultimate truth may be realised; while on the other hand, it represents that stationary vehicle of confusion over meaning, an embodiment of a conventional truth which is meaningless to individual meditational practice today. Meditation, through its prescription in text and mass-meditation methodology, has become a mass-production institutional activity contrary to

44 KN objects here, saying that Zen is quite different from Theravada practice—it is considered *a'da-ma'*, i.e. wrong-viewed, by the government *Wi'ni'* council. Also, he argued that, while records of lineages are kept because these are needed by pupils to distinguish between bad and good teachings, students need not read about meditation. Yet I consider my argument still stands that the WM tradition in Burma of today has become very much a textual tradition which has its implications, and that most of the laity interested in meditation do more than just listen to their teacher—they are making their own study of the records.

the ideal of WM, which is contrary to the ideal of personal experience through individually tailored meditation methods.

Contemporary WM *yaw"gi* advocate a Buddhism based on personal encounter with the Buddhist law (*da-ma'*) through immediate practice which transcends all conceptualization. They are not 'doing *tha-tha-na'* (*tha-tha-na pyu' de*), but they are 'applying themselves to the ultimate truth' (*ta-ya" a" htok te*). Yet the ranks of the practice tradition are populated with teachers preoccupied with understanding the scriptural references to meditation, and with scholars preoccupied with translating practice into the historically foolproof mediate form of text. To them, practice risks coming to represent a series of concepts rather than a real experience.⁴⁵ Some meditation teachers warn their pupils not to confuse one with the other, as the Ma-ha-si did when he pointed out that WM's meaning is sometimes wrongly taken not as an immediate private experience but as resident in language.⁴⁶

The *wi'pat-tha-na* preached by some is but the "sounding of texts", the work of those who cannot have learnt it from their own personal experience in meditation. This is why there are people who, while smarting with *wi'pat-tha-na*, are yet incapable of imparting it.' (Ma-ha-si 1981a: 2).

The scriptural learning-practice tensions resolved

So far we have established that there are contradictions in the practice tradition over the role of scriptural learning. But there is more to the concept of 'scriptural learning'. Indeed, Aw-ba-tha (1975: 357) distinguished between three intentions behind scriptural learning, only one of which is based on 'practice':

1. According to the example of dying from the bite of a snake because one does not know how to catch them: studying the texts in order to put someone else down with one's knowledge of the texts, or to defend oneself, is of no benefit and merely leads to the 4 hells;
2. To study with benefit in order to find release from the cycle of rebirths, with which one may achieve the path and fruits, and *neik-ban*;
3. According to the example of the treasure guardian: to perform scholarship in order to preserve knowledge, which is of limited benefit, and does not in itself lead to *neik-ban*.

Using scriptural learning to glorify oneself is a debased reason for scriptural learning. To preserve learning is laudable, but is still an inferior intention behind scriptural learning and is of no immediate benefit to the individual. Only implementing methodologically Buddhist

⁴⁵ See *ba-ua-na* in end-notes.

⁴⁶ It should be pointed out here that *Wi'thok-di mek*, the commentary composed by Bok-da'gaw"tha' around AD 433 held in such high regard by WM meditators, also has this 'double nature': it is on the one hand a 'compendium of doctrine' and 'the standard of all doctrinal orthodoxy for all Theravada Buddhists', while on the other, it is 'a detailed manual for meditation masters', representing 'how the Theravada community of monks developed the meditational tradition during a thousand-year period' (see Gombrich and Nanamoli quoted in Carrithers (1983: 46-66).

heritage with the intention of achieving *neik-ban* can be of true benefit. This emphasis on the implementation rather than demonstration or preservation of text had the result that many meditation teachers and *yaw*"gis were not only sceptical of their scriptural learning adversaries, but also of my anthropological type of scholarship, which, it was argued, should be accompanied by prolonged personal meditation.

Personal practice is not only a prerequisite to authorship of records of contemporary WM history, but a precondition for its truth and accuracy. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw is alleged by his biographer to have said,

I look at books in the library which are written in the environs of the library, but the laity do not understand the Pali references as they are the sounds of desks and libraries. That is why I write after having lived in the wilderness, the mountains and the bushes, and the laity do understand, because writing while meditating means that it is full of meditation sounds: if you read the books I have written, it is like meditating.' Thus he spoke. (Wun-ni'ta' 1956: 173) ၁၁၀ ၄၃၇

Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 450) came to a similar conclusion. After giving a rough appreciation and critique on the various works written by a number of renowned WM teachers and their pupils, he commented, 'Books on religion written on the basis of one's own true experiences for the exercising of "practice Buddhism" (*pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na*) are much better by far than those written for commercial gain.' Htei" Hlaing (1981a: 297) also quoted someone (Tei-za-lin-ka-ra') who complemented Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" as follows: 'This written work is not written with experience of writing: it is a work written by this teacher only after practicing himself.'

Not only is concentration (*tha-ma-di'*) required for scholarship, which is achievable through meditation,⁴⁷ but scholarship based on practice is more profound than any other type of scholarship. In fact, practice provides the meditator with a more accurate knowledge of the scriptures than can scriptural learning itself, as suggested, for example, about Sun"lun" (Sunlun n.d.: 7):⁴⁸

His achievement became known among the monks and many came to test him. Though he was a barely literate man his answers satisfied even the most learned monks. Very often they disagreed with his replies but when his answers were checked against the books they found many important passages in the canon to support his statements...

The practice/scriptural learning relationship is evidently an intricate^r complex one. Within the practice tradition the view is paramount that one must not confuse learning about meditation

47 KN pointed out that concentration (*tha-ma-di'*) underpins good scriptural learning. In *Ma'ha-gan-da Yon*", he pointed out, the routine is 'study during day time, meditate at night time' (*nei' sa thin, nya' ta-ya' hlaing*). This is widely considered the best way of studying, as it makes scriptural learning easy.

48 This episode recounted of Sun"lun" is reminiscent of the episode described in *Visuddhimagga* (Pe Maung Tin 1921-5: 111-3) with reference to the monk Tipitaka Culabhaya who, 'without learning the commentary...' recited the *Digha* and *Majjhima* to an assembly of scholars versed in the Five Nikayas who criticized him for not adopting the version of a teacher, and when he went to the Elder Mahadhammarakkhita who knew the whole scriptures, this monk replied 'What shall I teach you that is not known to you'.

with learning meditation. While teachers and scholars need to learn about meditation to be able to ensure this knowledge is carried out correctly and conveyed into the future, students should stay away from scholarship and concern themselves only with practice.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have not aimed to document the history of Buddhist practice and WM in Burma in its ethnographic detail. Burmese Buddhists themselves have not accomplished this and evidently much more serious research is needed. Dates, places, names, and exhaustive literature searches have been omitted for the sake of understanding the categories used by Burmese *yaw*"gis in their explanation of WM in the context of history. The term *wi'pat-tha-na* may today be used to refer to a particular meditation method which is distinct from 'concentration' (*tha-ma-ha*), 'charity' (*da-na*) and 'morality' (*thi-la*), but when WM is addressed as a historical tradition, Buddhist historians would appear to explain it under the rubric of the more comprehensive concept of practice (*pa-di'pat-ti*). The dynamic interrelationship between this concept and scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti*) is, as argued above, an integral feature of discourse in this type of history.

The literature on practice discussed so far challenges certain assumptions which gained widespread acceptance in the western literature on Buddhism. For example, Spiro characterized contemporary Buddhism as kammatic Buddhism as opposed to nibbanic Buddhism: as being about acts of 'charity' instead of 'meditation'. Yet it is quite clear from the sources we have considered that according to ^{some sources} Burmese opinion, historical developments if anything show quite the opposite, namely that today meditation 'roars', and that WM popularity has made Burmese Buddhism more salvation oriented than ever before. In our context of investigation, therefore, Spiro's understanding of kammatic Buddhism as the Buddhism of the Burmese, and nibbanic Buddhism as the normative Buddhism does not hold.⁴⁹

Nor is WM history represented, as Brohm has, as a 'meditational revolution' during the era of the Sixth Sangayana. The above histories treat WM quite clearly as part of the development in *pa-di'pat-ti* flowing along with varying intensity beginning with (Shin) A-ra'han as early as the 10th century AD rather than as 'revolution' over the last three decades.

49 KN also held that Spiro's distinction between kammatic and nibbanic Buddhism is not a Buddhist distinction. In chapter 8 I shall return to this discrepancy between my findings and those of Spiro.

4

Differing styles of novitiation ceremony in the meditation centre and outside

- (iv) The WM *yaw"gi* emphasises 'meditation' (*ba-wa-na*) over other forms of conventional Buddhist action, such as 'charity' (*da-na*) and 'morality' (*thi-la*). The latter are not unique to Buddhism.

In chapter 2 I delineated how, within the tradition of Buddhist practice, there is a tendency for WM *yaw"gi* to discriminate between (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*), 'true' Buddhism as reconstructed from a limited set of scriptures and as experienced in meditation vs customary, inherited or second-hand knowledge dependent on the senses, such as that involved in science, in vocational knowledge, in various foreign religions, as well as in the 'mistaken' Buddhendom (*bok-da'ba-tha*) of parentally received religious practice. In this chapter I shall analyse how this discrimination operates within the context of what is perhaps the most important lifecycle ceremony in Burmese Buddhist society, namely the novitiation ceremony, sponsorship of which constitutes the supreme act of charity.

Novitiation as a source of conflict

In 1982 I found myself in Yei-paw-gan village, about three hours journey by boat and jeep across the Irrawaddy river east from Rangoon, and one hours drive through the fields by ox-cart from Thon-gwa' Myo', the nearest town. The village monastery was about to be officially inaugurated as a meditation centre soon after the completion of a new assembly hall. Several meditation sessions had already been held in the uncompleted building during the preceding year, taught by monk meditation teachers from the Ma-ha-si Yeik-tha in Rangoon. I got to know about this village when I met some enthusiastic *yaw"gi* at the Instruction Festival by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw in Rangoon; they had invited me to visit their village. The meditation centre was intended to be open for a few ten-day periods in the year when labour requirements in the fields

were small. For the rest of the year it functioned as an ordinary monastery. To finance the building of this assembly hall which would facilitate the meditation sessions, each household of the village had contributed 50 kyats, a considerable amount of money for relatively poor peasants.

An incident was explained to me by my host which illustrates the conflicts which accompany such transformation from village monastery into meditation centre. A villager had argued with his father-in-law about the novitiation of his son. The father's preference was to ordain the boy in the local village monastery (*hpon"gyi" kyaung*) under its presiding monk, but the father-in-law's was to ordain the boy in the same building at a time when the monk teachers would be coming to the village to teach a ten-day meditation session, i.e. in the building when it was a meditation centre (*tha-tha-na' yeik-tha*).

Unaware of the significance of this conflict at the time, it was only later on during my stay in Burma when observing several other novitiations that I began to notice substantial differences between the forms they took at meditation centres as opposed to monasteries, as well as in the ideas its participants put forward to explain them.¹ The differences in ceremonial forms are, briefly, that the monastic novitiation lasts approximately three days² and includes music and entertainment, Brahmanic ritual, royal symbolism, and the propitiation of the supernatural, whereas the meditation centre novitiation lasts only one morning and, centring around a simple

1 I attended four novitiations at meditation centres: two at Ma-ha-si and one at Mo'hnyin" meditation centres in Rangoon, and one at Ma-ha Baw'di', Mandalay. Furthermore, I attended six novitiations at conventional monasteries: one at Shan-su Village (near Thon-gwa', Lower Burma); two at Ma-ha Da-ma'pa-la' Kyaung", Nan" U" Daik, and one in a Shwei-gyin monastery, Mandalay; and two in Hton-bu village (between Mandalay and Mon-ywa). I was myself initiated at the Nan" U" Daik under U" Pyin-nya-tha-ra'. These novitiations took place: one in August, two in October, one in November, one in January, one in February, one in March, and four in April.

2 KN claimed to have known conventional novitiations to have lasted as long as seven days.

novice ordination ceremony, is born from a sense of antagonism against inherited cultural tradition. The rationale for holding a novitiation in the meditation centre is complex. Suffice to say that it does not arise from unqualified rejection of all elements of monastic novitiation, but rather that it arises from different interpretations of a number of Buddhist concepts such as 'merit' (*ku'tho*) and 'otherworldliness' (*law"kot-ta-ra*).³ By no means all novitiations resulting in ordination at meditation centres are as brief and strict in their calculation of meritoriousness (e.g. parents may organise elaborate ceremonial at home), nor are all novitiations resulting in ordination at a monastery as elaborate and liberal in their calculation of meritoriousness.⁴ Nevertheless, I shall apply the terms 'monastic novitiation' and 'meditation centre novitiation' as short-hands for these two types respectively.

On the role of the novice

Most Burmese monasteries will have two types of occupant⁵—the monk and the novice. The novice is junior to the monk in respect of moral discipline, but not necessarily in absolute age or years spent in the *Than-ga*. The novice is—with only the Ten Precepts and the 70 rules from the monastic code of conduct (*wi'ni*)—subject to a less strict moral regime than the monk who has to follow 227 rules of the monastic code of conduct (*wi'ni*), which translates into no less than 91,805,036,000 detailed rules.⁶

3 KN viewed elaborate ceremonial as good for drawing together the community, but as bad if the person cannot afford it (see also chapter 2). In his view the simple ceremony is according to Buddha's will, as happened with his son Ya-hu'la, whereas the long ceremony is not according to the Buddha's will; the latter is based on ignorance, the fear to discard traditional customs, and the competition for worldly pride as to who can perform the most impressive display. The village procession is a real display of pomp out of desire to become famous. The building of the 'palace' (*man"dat*), the hiring of the Burmese orchestra (*hsaing" waing*), the worshipping of spirits (*nat-zin pya*), the dressing up in royal costume of the novitiates, and so forth, are all unnecessary. The *beik-theik* ceremony, according to KN, has to do with 'Hinduism', but nothing with the Buddha's teachings. These additional activities put many people into debt. All that is required to become a novice are the robes and requisites for the novice, and training in the basic knowledge to become a novice (such as the Three Refuges—*tha-ra-na' gon thon"ba*).

4 In using the short-hand notation 'conventional monastic novitiation' and 'meditation centre novitiation', I am not claiming that all 'monastic' novitiations are elaborate or that all meditation centre ceremonies are simple and brief. For example, KN informs me that in Ma-ha Gan-da-yon in Amarapura, which is a monastery, not a meditation centre, we find the novitiation simplified and rationalized in a similar manner as I have sketched in the meditation centre version. It would appear that the now deceased U" Za-na-ka Bi'wun-tha held the opinion very strongly that the novitiation should be a simple affair. Conversely, there will undoubtedly be meditation centres which allow elaborate novitiation ceremonies to take place on their compounds. Certainly some *yaw"gi* will organise an elaborate ceremony for the novices prior to the ceremony at the meditation centre. So the distinction between the monastic novitiation and the meditation centre novitiation is not water tight, and is simply to show how, in the context of meditation centres in Burma, a particular ideology pertains which condemns elaborate ceremonial, preferring a simpler novitiation ritual.

5 See end-notes, 'monastery occupants'.

6 On the 90 billion minor rules see Than Tun (n.d.:14) who based his information on publications within the Shweigyin tradition. I have encountered reference to these during fieldwork, and KN also referred to it.

Ordination into monkhood⁷ cannot take place before the incumbent is nineteen years and three months old (according to our reckoning).⁸ It is customary for younger boys to be ordained as a novice.⁹ But even adults seeking ordination as a monk must ordain as novices prior. Novicehood allows familiarisation with the *Wi'ni* before committing oneself to the high standard of morality monkhood demands. Some never elect to be ordained monk and prefer to observe the less strict moral regime of novicehood, in which case they are referred to as 'big novice' (*ko-yin-gyi*). But with ordination as monk the process of ordination does not necessarily stop; monks may be ordained repetitively upon invitation by pious Buddhists and to purify their morality, which is referred to as 'adding to the discipline' (*theik-hka htat thi*).¹⁰

Novices must pay respect to monks, but otherwise hierarchy is not based on absolute age but on the length of time spent in the robes, which is counted in the number of 'rainy seasons' (*wa theik-hka*). If the number of rainy seasons spent in the order is the same, superiority is determined by the date of ordination; if this is the same, then by the time of ordination; then by the number of rainy seasons of the preceptors; and, if these are the same, finally by the number of times the monk officiated at a monk's ordination ceremony (*ka-ma-wa sa hpat thi*).¹¹

The importance of novitiation

The importance of the novitiation ceremony to the Burmese was by no means exaggerated when *Wi'thu'da* (1982:13) poetically commented that,

even if one were to write a record of the benefits of the *shin-byu'* on a blackboard the size of the sky, with letters the size of mustard-seeds, one would sooner run out of blackboard, than exhaust all the benefits of the ceremony.

The *shin-byu'* ceremony, literally 'to make lord'¹², has its earliest precedent at the time of the Buddha when he ordained Ya-hu'la (P. Rahula), the boy begotten when he was still prince, who was then seven years old.¹³ In Burma today it is a compulsory life-cycle ritual for all Burmese Buddhist boys, comprising an array of separate rituals, and the actors include a range of

7 See end-notes, 'monk-ordination'.

8 KN pointed out that in Buddhism the last three months of pregnancy are counted as life, so that strictly speaking the minimum age for monkhood is 19 years and 3 months.

9 Novitiation is also (apart from *shin-byu'*) referred to as 'doing novicehood' (*tha-ma-nei pyu' thi*) and *ugga-han*.
10 Repeating ordination of monks already ordained (*theik-hka htat thi*) indicates the importance of ordination to sponsors, for it is mostly upon invitation by the laity of a monk they wish to honour that this ceremony is carried out. Some monks have been ordained dozens of times in this manner without ever leaving monkhood. For example, the monk Pa-ra-ma' Wun-na'theik-ti' (1980: 9-18) lists 111 such ceremonies with the names and addresses of their sponsors. KN informs me that some monks ask for a repeat ordination if they suspect their first ordination was for some reason improperly carried out.

11 I am grateful to KN for pointing out the latter two ways of measuring ranking among monks.

12 I translated *shin* in *shin-byu'* as 'lord', but it could also mean 'venerable'. See end-notes, 'Shin'.

13 The most famous example of novitiation concerns the Buddha's offer to his son Ya-hu'la, who came to ask him for inheritance at the age of seven, to ordain him as a novice (Hla Pe 1984:42). This is described in Za-na-ka (1979:100-108). Other examples include Shin Rel-wa-ta' (Za-na-ka 1979:109-112) and Shin Pan-di'ta' (Za-na-ka 1979:112-119).

specialists as well as non-specialists and an everchanging public of close family, relatives, neighbours, friends and more distantly related guests, who are brought together repetitively over a maximum period of three days. It is sometimes referred to also as the 'making lord and earpiercing ceremony' (*shin-byu' na"tha' min-ga-la*), in which case there will be girls included for earpiercing at the Brahmanic ritual on the second day of the ceremony, but these girls do not generally play a significant role in the rest of the ceremonial.¹⁴ The ordination ceremony of the novice is considerably different from that of the monk. The *shin-byu'* is the most publicly celebrated of the three types of ordination; less so is ordination as a fully-fledged monk. The novices may remain in the order for as little as 24 hours or, if they so desire, a life-time.

Novitiations may be held throughout the year, but are generally held between mid January and June, after the harvest, when the crops have been sold so there is enough money to pay for the ritual, but before the rainy season (*wa*)¹⁵ when there is an injunction against monks travelling. There are no female novitiation ceremonies, though these are believed to have taken place during Gautama Buddha's lifetime.¹⁶

The age at which boys undergo the *shin-byu'* varies greatly, being anywhere from four to twenty years old.¹⁷ At the time of the Buddha, there was initially no minimum age limit for novitiation. Later, becoming sensitive to the possibility that the monastic order might degenerate into a kind of covert family life, the Buddha proceeded to set a minimum age limit at 15 years old for novitiation. But out of pity for the children of a number of deceased lay supporters of his disciples Shin Mauk-ga-lan and Shin Tha-ri'pok-ta-ra, who were left uncared for, the Buddha instructed that the minimum age for novitiation should instead be interpreted according to the physical development of the child, and he lowered this age limit to 'the age at which a child can fend off a crow from his alms-bowl' (Pyin-nya-tha-ra' 1981:5-8).

To understand how novitiation could evolve into such a grand ceremony, we must understand its role in the world of Buddhist laymen. First, this ceremony has ensured the

14 Traditionally many men also had their ears pierced.

15 See end-notes, *wa*.

16 Wi'thu'da (1982:57-8) explained from the scriptures about the novitiation ceremony of Da-ma'dein-na, wife of A-na-gan Wi'tha-hka', who was ordained female novice and who was sent to a female monastery (*beik-hku-ni-ma' kyaung*) in the city Ya-za-gyo. This episode is also recounted in Ma-ha-si (1981b:14). Nun ordination ceremonies became popular during the time of King Min'don" (see (Me) KIn", appendix B.), but these have never gained widespread acceptance because of the lower public status the nun enjoys.

17 Authors seem to disagree on the age limits: Hla Pe (1984:44) claimed between 5-19 with under normal circumstances between 13-16 years old; Brohm (1957:191) said that, 'So far as Buddhist codes are concerned, this event—which need not be marked by any of the elaborate social apparatus common to the Burmese scene—may take place at any time the individual is capable of understanding the monastic code of conduct. He may therefore be pre-adolescent or post-adolescent without necessarily affecting his eligibility', but noted that the preferred age in Kaungauk is between 13 and 15.

Brohm (1957:191) also held that 'it is not only ideally but normally the case that the oldest participant in the *shinbyu* ceremony (very frequently the eldest brother of a family group) is in the desired age range...'

KN points out that the extreme youthfulness of a novice is sometimes explained by the ill-health or old age of the parents or grand-parents, which makes an early novitiation necessary for their peace of mind.

continuation and preservation of the *tha-tha-na* and Buddhist values. If *pa-ri'yat-ti'*, the act of scriptural learning, ensures the continuity and perpetuation of the *tha-tha-na*, so does ordination of boys into the monastic lineage. Indeed, the saying goes 'one palmyra tree, one novice', which signifies

that a person who plants a palmyra palm, has as much merit (on account of the use made of its fronds (i.e. making them into palm leaf manuscripts upon which are inscribed the Buddhist scriptures and commentaries)) as one who prepares a novice to enter the priesthood. (Judson 1953:1054, note 98)

Second, this ceremony ordains the boy into what was traditionally the major avenue for education from the 12th century right up to the end of the last century, when Christian missionary and British colonial secular schools became alternative avenues for education. Eventually the same term 'monastery' (*kyaung*) came to be extended to refer to the modern secular lay-school.¹⁸ Sangermano, an Italian missionary priest of the Barnabite Society of Milan, who lived in Rangoon and Ava from 1783 to 1806, found monastic education to be the only form of education in the country, and referred to the monasteries as, 'the schools and indeed the only schools in the empire'.¹⁹ Although Christian missionary education had been established in Burma before the 17th Century,²⁰ it was not a significant force until after the First Anglo-Burmese War in the 19th century.²¹ Rough calculations on the first census statistics available on monastery schools suggests that when the British occupied Lower Burma in the 1870s there was one monastery to just over 700 of the population (inclusive of non-Buddhists), and that a little less than two percent of the population was being educated in these monasteries (excluding monks) at any one time. With competition from often better endowed secular schools where education

18 *Kyaung*, the current Burmese term for 'school', is also the term for 'monastery'; the secular school inherited this name when it took over the education from the monastery. The present term for university, *tek-ka-tho* is derived from the word Taxila, the name of a great centre of learning in northern India.

19 Sangermano (1893:155), Kaung (1963:18).

20 'Roman Catholic priests worked intermittently in Burma from 1548 onwards, subject to the vicissitudes of policy of those in power and the fluctuations in the efforts of the European peoples to establish trading relations with Burma. The first substantial educational work of Roman Catholic missionaries was commenced in 1721, probably at Syriam; it started with the provision of education for the descendants of the bayingyis and kalapyets (Portuguese, Eurasians, Negroes and Malabarites enslaved and settled in various part of Upper Burma after the sack of Syriam by Anaukpetlun in 1613) and spread to work among the indigenous peoples. After the First Burma War, conditions for the development of education by missions were favourable. The Roman Catholic Mission staff from Europe increased from one missionary in 1824 to 25 in 1856. American Baptist Mission work began in 1813 when Judson and his wife settled in Rangoon, but school work proper was not established until 1826 when Mrs. Judson opened a school in Amherst. This work made progress among the Talaings and Burmese; later it spread to the Karens and developed rapidly.' (Burma 1936:128-29).

21 Between 1761-1824 there were seldom more than half a dozen Christian missionaries in both Upper and Lower Burma (Kaung 1963:48). The education they gave was until 1824, the time of the first Anglo-Burmese War, limited to converted Christians, of whom there were remarkably few among the ethnic Burmese (Kaung 1963:55-6).

offered the student better prospects in work, a saying evolved during the colonial period: 'Monastic students are beggars. English students are best.'²²

Nevertheless, over the many centuries in which Buddhism evolved prior to colonization, the monastery came to represent the bastion of civilization and knowledge, and it is sometimes said that 'civilisation starts at the monastery' (*ma kaung" yin kyaung" go po'*, literally 'if no good, send to the monastery'²³). This is why Wi'thu'da (1982:6) remarked about the novitiation,

Every Buddhist household takes the *shin-byu'* of their jewels of sons with great seriousness, to signify Burmese civilisation of the highest order.

Traditionally there are at every monastery two classes of pupils who were taught together. First there is the monastic lay-pupil (*hpon"gyi" kyaung"tha"*), who is educated at the monastery from the age of seven or eight years old but does not live there or take the monastic code of conduct. Second, there is the novice (*shin tha-ma-nei, ko-yin*) frequently the lay pupil ordained into the robes somewhat later on in life, who resides in the monastery, and must abide by the rules of the monastic code of conduct (*wi'ni"*).

The syllabus²⁴ of this monastic education varied over time, and still varies between different monastic sects; it also depends on the preference of the individual abbots of the monastery. If the alphabet has not been mastered, then this has to be learnt first by means of spelling exercises (*thin-bon"gyi"*). Then there is an emphasis on learning texts which deal with discipline, morality, and general code of conduct, including the Ten Buddha birth stories *Zat (hse zaung dwe")*²⁵ and

22 *Hpon"gyi" kyaung"tha" thu daung" sa", in-gu-leik kyaung"tha" a-kaung" sa"* (suggested by KN).

23 This saying is sometimes used to make fun of people pretending to be devout and generous by donating things turning bad. One monk interpreted this saying, rather unconventionally, as the general bad standards of offerings to monasteries: 'if (the food) no good, send it to the monastery'.

24 See end-notes, 'monastic syllabus'.

25 See end-notes, 'zai'.

the *law* "ka' ni-di".²⁶ Prayers (*hpa-ya* "shit hko") and spells (*pa-yeik-gyi*) are also taught, as well as elementary arithmetic. The emphasis on developing literacy during the stay in the monastery must have contributed to the exceptionally high literacy rate among Burmese Buddhists.²⁷

Third, and this is perhaps its most popular function, the novitiation ceremony provides the opportunity for all those involved—the novitiates, the sponsors and the participants—to earn religious 'merit' (*ku'tho*).²⁸ Sponsorship of the novitiation is the religious offering par excellence, and the term for religious offering, *a-hlu*, when used without further qualification, is assumed to refer to the sponsoring of a novitiation. The merit derived can be 'shared' with others. Also, when the sponsors remember the *shin-byu'* at death, they will at least ameliorate their sufferings in the rounds of rebirth, and possibly even not fall into the lower abodes at all.²⁹

Finally, novitiation is also widely considered as having the significance of initiation into manhood.³⁰

So the novitiation ceremony—with its significance as a form of recruitment to the monastic order and its perpetuation, providing education, providing merit, and initiating into manhood—is inevitably a special event in the world of the Buddhist laity. Apart from becoming a monk oneself, no other act but the sponsorship of a novitiation allows a layman to claim to be an 'inheritor of the Buddhist religious realm' (*tha-tha-na' mwei*). Mauk-ga-li' pok-ta'teik-tha, told

26 James Gray translated some of the more popular Burmese *law* "ka' ni-di" into English (*Lokaniti*. London: Trubner & Co, 1886. Buddha Sasana Council reprint (n.d.)). Gray (p vii) defined the Sanskrit-Pali word *ṛṇi* as 'equivalent to "conduct" in its abstract, and "guide" in its concrete signification'. As applied to books: 'it is a general term for a treatise which includes maxims, pithy sayings, and didactic stories, intended as a guide to such matters of everyday life as form the character of an individual and influence him in his relations to his fellow-men' (p vii). The *Lokaniti* 'is taught in almost every monastic school in Burma' (p x).

27 Steinberg (1982) gave the literacy rates as 61 percent for women and 83 percent of the men in Burma Proper. I suspect it is probably higher than that among the ethnic Burmans.

28 See end-notes, 'ku'tho'.

29 KN pointed out that this was the theme of a recent Burmese film by Sein Myin', entitled 'One father and an only son' (*a-hpei ta-hku' tha' ta-hku'*). This film deals with a divorced father who is unemployed and is struggling to get together a *shin-byu'* for his son. On the day of the ceremony, just prior to it taking place, he has an accident which his son does not know about; but because he could see the procession of his son as a novice-to-be in his imagination, he nevertheless dies peacefully and with untroubled heart.

30 This view of the novitiation as marking entry into manhood would appear to be born out by the many songs written for recitation by girl-friends of the initiate. The following is a song for girls waiting for their boyfriend to leave the novitiation,

'In front of this girl's house

There are one or two clumps of hsa-thahpu flowers

The parrots are swarming around them.

Oh, my precious parrots, please spare them.

They are intended to adorn his ears,

When my beloved leaves novicehood' (Htin Aung 1962:117).

Asoka that his gifts made him only a 'master of charity' (*da-na' shin*) as yet, and that it required the ordination of his sons to allow him to become an 'inheritor of the Buddhist religious realm' (see Chapter 2). Sometimes couples without children may 'borrow' a novice in order to obtain this merit, or sometimes boys may be initiated more than once to allow adults the chance to become a sponsor. At least one foreign scholar claimed to have observed a token ordination at the time of the naming ceremony, held a few months after birth of a boy, who was wrapped in a piece of an old monastic robe.³¹

A special vocabulary is associated with ordination into the monastic order. The novice is a 'lord-to-be' (*shin-laung*"), who is to be 'exalted' (*chi" hmyauk thi*)³² into novicehood, or who is to 'cross over from the society of the world/people to the society of the Buddhist religious realm'. He is to become a 'Holy Son of the Buddha' (*hpa-ya" tha"daw*), whose task it is to uphold and perpetuate the Buddha's teachings by becoming a member of the monastic order and he has entered the royal lineage of the Sakyan dynasty. This allows the sponsors of the novitiation ceremony (and of the ordination of monks) the titles of 'royal Mother' (*me-daw*) and 'royal Father' (*hka-me"daw*) and the right to use golden umbrellas at their funeral.

Duration of residence in the monastery as a novice was traditionally ideally at least three rainy seasons: one for the mother, one for the father, and one for the novice himself,³³ after which the monastic order may be left³⁴ for secular employment, though some may stay on to follow a

31 This 'token ordination' is referred to by both Brohm (1957:207; 1972:38) and Spiro (1970:236). Brohm attended such ceremony himself in Upper Burma, and found that this practice was denied by Rangoon government officials, and so he concluded that it must be an Upper Burman practice. I have not encountered this practice. KN held that what has been interpreted as a 'token ordination' is probably merely a way of protecting from danger through use of the monk's robe.

32 Judson (1953:292) referred to *chi" hmyin'* or *chi" hmyauk thi*, "To promote, exalt, *tha" go myat-zwa hpa-ya" tha-tha-na-daw thwin" tho' thut thwin" chi" hmyin' laik thi*, he exalted his son by initiating him into the religion of the most excellent Buddha. This is a form of expression which constantly occurs in petitions requesting permission to hold a *shin-byu' bwe"*."

33 Kei-la-tha (1976:hka') as well as Nash (1965:124) note a variant: one rainy season for Buddha, one for the father and the mother, and one for the teacher.

34 When novitiates leave the order they are *shin lein byan thi*, and thereby become *ko-yin lu htwei*.

monastic career. The introduction of secular education in the course of this century seriously affected the length of time spent in the monastery; few novices remain in the monastery for three whole years, and most stay much less, sometimes even as little as 24 hours.³⁵ Parental permission is considered essential before a boy can be ordained.³⁶

The following account refers to novitiation resulting in ordination into a conventional monastery.

The conventional monastic novitiation ceremony

Bigandet's observations of the conventional novitiation ceremony as held during the 18th century captures well the mood and significance of the event at the time, though it is rather lacking in detail,

'It is an almost universal custom among the Burmese and Siamese to cause boys who have attained the age of puberty, or even before that time, to enter for a year or two one of the many Talapoinic houses, to put on the yellow dress, for the double purpose of learning to read and write, and of acquiring merits for future existences. On the occasion of the death of certain persons, it happens sometimes that a member of the family will enter the community for six months or a year. When a young lad is to make his first entrance into a house of the order, he is led thereto, riding on a richly caparisoned pony, or sitting in a fine palanquin carried on the shoulders of four or more men. He is allowed to use one or several gold umbrellas, which are held opened over his head. During the triumphal march he is preceded by a long line of men and women, attired in their richest dresses, carrying a large quantity of presents destined for the use of the inmates of the Kiaong (such is the general name given to all the houses of the brotherhood in Burmah) which the young postulant is to reside in. In this stately order the procession, attended with a band playing on various musical instruments, moves on slowly and circuitously through the principal streets of the town toward the monastery that has been fixed upon. This display of an ostentatious pomp is, on the part of the parents and relatives, an honour paid to the postulant who generously consecrates himself to so exalted a calling, and on the part of the youth a last farewell to worldly vanities. He has no sooner descended from his splendid conveyance and crossed the threshold of the kiaong than he is delivered by his parents into the hands of the superior, and placed into his care. His head is instantly shaved; he is stripped of his fine secular dress, and habited in the plain and humble yellow garb; he must lay aside every sort of ornament,

35 Hla Pe was a novice only for 8 days. Nash (1965:124) noted that 'In Nondwin this idea was recently operative, for more than 85 percent of the men in the village above 25 years of age had in fact spent three Wa seasons in the kyaung'. A survey held by Spiro (1970:246-7) showed a rather lower percentage of novices spending three rainy seasons in the monastery, somewhere between 10 and 30 percent. He noted that of 52 Yeigyis adults (out of Yeigyis' 119 households): 8 spent between one day to two weeks, 3 between 2-4 weeks, 4 between 1-6 months, 11 between 6-12 months, 10 between 1-2 years, 11 between 2-3 years, and 5 more than 3 years in novicehood. He furthermore distinguished between those staying long and those staying only briefly in the monastery according to the age of initiation and degree of poverty, where: extremely young sons of poor families remained in monasteries for longer periods because it relieved the strain on family income; old sons of poor families were taken out early because their labour was required; very young boys who were still in need of their parents were left for no more than a night only. He furthermore noted that the contemporary situation of the novitiation presents a different picture, where periods of novicehood have come to be drastically cut due to the demands from school, and, out of a sample of 24 boys attending government schools, ranged only from two to fifteen days.

36 The story goes that one day the Buddha resided in Kapilawut, and he ordered his disciple Tha-ri'p'ok-ta-ra to ordain his son Ya-hu'la, who was only heir to the throne. The father of the Buddha objected to this, as he was about to lose his only heir. The Buddha then made it a rule that permission should be obtained from those left behind. This also counts for wives of monks to be.

and remain contented with the unassuming simplicity becoming his new position. The kiaong is to become his home, and its inmates are substituted in the room of his father and mother, brothers and sisters' (Bigandet 1880, Vol II:263)

Preparations for the novitiation ceremony start months ahead. It has to be negotiated which boys and girls are to be included, and on which scale it is to be held.³⁷ Money must be saved, an auspicious day chosen; and the feasting tent (*man"dat*)³⁸, the eating tents, the master of the *beik-theik* (*beik-theik hsa-ya*), the orchestra and the singers must be engaged. Labour is freely contributed by relatives, neighbours and friends, who help cook and roll cheroots. Work continues throughout the penultimate night.

The first day

Early in the morning of the first day a group go round the houses to announce the novitiation and to invite villagers to attend.³⁹ At about midday crowds begin to fill the feasting tent, swelling to a peak at about three in the afternoon. They take turns to eat in batches, while the rest of the crowd are being entertained by the orchestra. Meanwhile, the novitiates are sitting on a slightly raised platform in the feasting tent, beautifully made up and dressed in royal dress. Their appearance is that of 'princes' (*min"tha"*), wearing a 'crown' (*ma-gaik*), Brahmanical cords (*sa-lwe*), a twenty cubit long waistcloth (*a-taung hnit-hse ba-hso*), and a beautifully decorated shirt (*ga-daung in"gyi*). The feasting hall is built in the shape and with the adornments of a palace. The walls are decorated with paintings or pictures of scenes such as the Buddha going out into the forest, short Buddha birth-stories (*zat*), or royal histories.

In the late afternoon the procession around the village (*shin laung" hle' pwe"*) begins. The procession follows an 'auspicious' (*min-ga-la*) clockwise direction (with the right hand in the inside of the circle). The novitiates are carried by various means of transport, ranging from horses, cars, elephants or boats, to the shoulders of relatives.⁴⁰ Verses, sometimes specially

37 For example, Hla Pe (1984:46) found that in Moulmein 'no shinbyu should be held with an even number of candidates'. At his own there were four—himself, his two brothers, and his cousin—and so his aunts who took care of the organization adopted a village boy to be included in the ceremony for the occasion.

38 Hla Pe (1984) translated *man"dat* as 'marquee', Brohm (1957:192) as 'pandal'.

39 In Hla Pe's case invitation cards were sent out to invite relatives and friend living outside the village, while within the village invitations were made by word of mouth.

40 Hla Pe (1984:47) pointed out some of the varieties in transport used: 'Many other forms of transport have also been used: motor cars, elephants, and even a man carrying the candidate on his neck. In some cases the candidates have no other forms of transport except shank's pony, their own legs.' Since the horse Chantaka is an intrinsic part of the Prince's renunciation to the forest, perhaps the novitiation is not really what some observers have suggested, namely in emulation of the Buddha leaving the city?

composed for the occasion, are recited on the way. Age-mates of the novitiates shout these verses out teasingly at the novitiates, and the novitiates throw coins at the teasers, causing a scramble. The procession halts at the village spirit shrine, where the novitiates propitiate the spirit with an offering tray (*nat-zin pya' thi*).⁴¹ About halfway around the village, attempts are made by the age-mates to 'kidnap' the novitiates, after which they are released upon a payment from the sponsors. The procession continues towards the monastery, which it encircles twice in a sunwise (that is, 'clockwise') direction. The members of the procession enter, offer various trays of offerings to the monks, who in return give them the precepts and recite spells (*pa-yeik*). On return to the feasting hall, novitiates are prevented from going in by some of their age-mates (*shwei kyo" ta" thi*), who let the novitiates through only after receiving payment (*Pyin-nya-tha-ra'* 1981:38-39).⁴²

Throughout the first day a number of supernatural agencies are propitiated. Others may be included, but the following are standard: the monk saint Shin U'pa-gok⁴³ for control over the weather and tide; the mother-father's side spirit (*mi'hsaing ba'hsaing nat*); in the Lower Burma Delta only, U" Shin Gyi", a spirit with control over the weather; and the local witch (*ywa-thu, son"ma*). Apart from the fear that weather conditions may interfere with the ceremony, they are propitiated because spirits are thought to be apt to attempting to harm the novitiates or their families prior to ordination.

The second day

Throughout the night into the early morning of the second day the orchestra entertains, while preparations are made for the feeding of the guests, and of the monks. In the morning the monks are sent food offerings. New guests will arrive who have their breakfast in turns and are entertained by the orchestra. Nearly all guests will bring a contribution, considered highly meritorious, towards the expenses of the novitiation (*ku pan' thi*), for which they receive some return from the sponsors such as a cigar or a packet of pickled tea.

41 KN found this showing of the novitiates to the village spirit for protection from evil to be against Buddhism.

42 The novitiation ceremony has certain things in common with other rituals, such as marriage. The coin scattering occurs at marriage, and so does the *shwei kyo" ta" thi*, as described by Hla Pe (1984:98), when the bridegroom has his way barred on the way to the bridegroom in the bedroom, 'That evening about 10 O'clock the bridegroom made for the bedroom, which was on the first floor. He found his way barred from the foot of the staircase to the top of it by a series of strings. Each end of these was being held by a person. This practice is known in Burmese as *kyo ta* "string-barring". He was told that they were "gold and silver strings", and that if he wanted to pass them he must pay the toll. He had to fish out some money from his pocket...'

43 See end-notes, (Shin) U'pa-gok.

Around midday, the 'Master of the *Beik-theik*' (*beik-theik hsa-ya*) performs a number of standard rituals, alternated with interludes from the orchestra, singers and clowns. He must make the occasion an auspicious one, and the ritual usually includes: the paying respects to the Five *A-nan-da*, namely the Buddha, the *da-ma'*, the monastic order, the parents and the teachers; inviting (*pin' thi*) the Buddha; inviting various categories of spirits, the higher as well as the lower; putting the charm thread over the head around the neck of the novitiates for protection (*chi-man" gwin" sut thi*); and the ritual feeding of the novitiates (Wi'thu'da 1982:119-48, 198-208, 270-78; Pyin-nya-tha-ra' 1981:45; Aung Chein 1978).⁴⁴

The novitiates are taken to the monastery in the early afternoon, where their heads are shaved.⁴⁵ Turmeric is rubbed on their heads so as to 'be freed from the smells of sheep, goats, deers and humans' (Wi'thu'da 1982:108). They are then ordained by the monks.⁴⁶ It takes about half an hour, consisting of five parts, namely: handing over the monastic robe by the novitiates to the monk (*thin-gan" at thi*), requesting the robes (*thin-gan" taung" thi*), requesting to become novices (*shin tha-ma-nei hpyit bo' taung" ban thi*), requesting the Three Jewels (the *Bok-da'*, the *Da-ma'*, and the *Than-ga*) and the Ten Precepts (*tha-ra-na'gon ne' thi-la' hse ba" taung" thi*), and finally requesting an instructor (*u'pyit-ze hsa-ya taung" thi*). The novitiate must be able to pronounce Pali words properly, and know the proper ways to address monks. He officially becomes a novice upon taking the precepts. Later on in the afternoon the members of the monastery, including the novices in their new robes, are invited to the feasting hall where the monks are given offerings and worshipped. The monks preach, recite verses and then close with the water libation ceremony and the distribution of merit to all creatures in the 31 planes of existence. It is striking how few people this ordination part of the ceremonial draws; quite unlike the crowds turning up for the village procession and the *beik-theik* ceremonial.

The third day

In the morning of the third day, the monks, including the newly ordained novices, go to the home of the sponsors where they are paid respects to by the laity and receive offerings. The monks give the novices a Pali 'title' (*bwe'*) to replace their Burmese 'human name' (*lu na-mi*). The laity take the precepts, one of the monks will preach a sermon, and the water libation ceremony is performed once again.

44 Wi'thu'da (1982:120) gives a clear 14 step sequence according to which the *beik-theik* ceremony is meant to proceed, yet from Aung Chein (1978:102-148), who is meant to be an authority on this, this sequence is not so clear. See end-notes, *beik-theik hsa-ya'*.

45 The episode of head tonsure has little formal ritual flavour. This was observed also by Brohm (1957:205). The hair of the boy is sometimes collected and kept, but often disposed of without much regard. In fact, the whole of the ordination ritual is not attended by the crowds that attended the amusement earlier on.

46 Hla Pe donned white robes prior to donning the yellow robes (1984:48).

A note on variations

The description of the monastic novitiation given so far refers to a complete ceremony which is aspired to by many Burmese, particularly in the rural areas; yet we find in practice that the novitiations actually held may differ considerably from the description given above for two important reasons.

First, there are many differences in the order of celebration and additions and attenuations of the ceremony, which may be due to regional variations.⁴⁷ Brohm (1957:192) drew attention to this when he remarked that 'there is considerable variety to be found in the nuances of ritual behavior from one ceremony to another', while 'in broad outlines they are of course quite similar'. Particularly the village processions tend to be subject to great variation; Nash (1965:128) described a novitiation in Nondwin and nearby Ondaw village, Upper Burma, which excluded a visit to the local monastery during the procession on the first day, but describes a second smaller procession on the second day during which the monastery is visited. Similarly, the ordination of Prof. Hla Pe (1984:47) in his youth seems to have included no less than three processions, one for each of the three days; the third day was by boats to two neighbouring villages. The hiding of the novitiates took place during this third day, at the end of which entertainment was provided. Similarly, Spiro (1970:240) also remarked on a village procession in Yeigy, Upper Burma, during which not one but three monasteries were visited; yet he does not refer to any visit to the village spirit shrine during the procession. Htin Aung (1962:117) referred to the attempts at kidnapping the novitiate as taking place not during but after the village procession. KN held that the naming ceremony often follows the ordination ceremony immediately on the same day. There also appears to be a difference in the attitude to the earboring ceremony by villagers in Yeigy, where it is said that 'without an earboring ceremony, there can be no *shin-byu*', and the girls are included as 'princesses' among the 'princes' (novitiates) during the village procession on the first day (Spiro 1970:239-40); this suggests an emphasis on the earpiercing ceremony not confirmed by my own experience of the novitiation ceremonies I witnessed.⁴⁸ Wi'thu'da (1982:119) noted that in some regions the *beik-theik* ceremonial is held in the morning rather than the afternoon. Linguistically also there appear to be regional variations.

47 Hla Pe (1984:42) interpreted the procession as, 'The reenactment of the future Buddha's renunciation of the world; Prince Siddhattha forsaking his luxurious life of a prince to become a recluse; his leaving on his horse the palace, and the city with the help of deities; the intervention of Mara; and his attaining Enlightenment.' I cannot recall encountering these explanations among my informants.

48 Spiro (1970:235) claimed that a boy's early initiation is determined by the moment 'the boy's sister has reached the appropriate age for the ear-boring ceremony; and since the two are always held conjointly, the brother may have an early initiation so that his sister's ceremony—without which she cannot be married—is not unduly delayed'. My experience in Rangoon is that many women have not undergone the earboring ceremony at all.



Photo 2. Entertainment at a conventional novitiation ceremony attracts large numbers of visitors. An orchestra at the back is commanded by the master of ceremony (beik-theik hsa-ya) on the left (dressed in white) who is, though a Burmese Buddhist in reality, at least symbolically a Brahmin. In charge of the various stages of the ceremony, he has invoked the 'medium' on the right (standing up) who is about to demand money from the father and sponsor of the novitiates (with white turban on the right).



Photo 3. A procession in the conventional novitiation ceremony. In front: the smallest boy to be ordained is not older than three years, he is included in one ceremony with his bigger brothers to save on the expense of having another ceremony. Behind him follows his poorer little cousin of about the same age, who had to do with a bicycle because his parents could not afford the pony, but who did benefit from the processions, orchestra and the Brahmanic ritual paid for by his wealthier relatives. Note the royal regalia, including the golden umbrellas and the crowns. The novitiates are preceded by their elder brothers, and followed by the procession of musicians, unmarried girls, and other spectators.

Wi'thu'da (1982:72-103), for example, discussed regional variation in the names of the verses composed for the *shin-byu'* for reciting and shouting out during the village procession, which are variously called *hswe'*, *shwe'*, or *sho" ya-du'*. The invitation to the village procession was referred to by Pyin-nya-tha-ra' as 'calling the single girls', which is apparently common in Mon-ywa, but in Pa-hkok-ku this is referred to as 'shouting out loudly, hey you!' (*byo" hit thi*), and in Nyaung U" it is referred to as 'thrusting out, hey you!' (*byo" hto" thi*) (Wi'thu'da 1982:40).

Second, often short-cuts are made in the full ceremony to save on the expense: Brohm (1957:194) suggested that the village procession is often left out 'for reasons of expense'. The ceremony described by Brohm was an extremely elaborate one which cost a great deal of money, and he described it because it was the most elaborate one. The other ceremonies he attended would appear to have been cut because of the inability to meet their expense. The capital outlay required for the ceremony is in excess of ten to twenty times the monthly average wage. In some poor neighbourhoods special funds are set apart communally for the novitiation of sons as a kind of insurance policy. Poverty combined with a lack of economically viable relatives leads in many cases to the ceremony being foregone altogether rather than held in a more simple form.⁴⁹ There are two indices for measuring poverty: the number of novitiates and girls included as candidates at the ceremony, and the age difference between its participants. Both of these maximise the overheads per candidate. Brohm (1957:191) held that,

it is quite usual that younger brothers, or cousins, or even unrelated friends, may join in the ceremony in order to avoid the additional expense of having separate *shinbyu* stages for their benefit. Similarly, the girls who undergo the *na-dwin* [*na"tha' min-ga-la*] in a combined ceremony may also be younger sisters, cousins, or close friends whose families wish to share expenses without having to wait 'too long' for the young lady to enjoy her first *mingala*.

Further short-cuts are frequently necessary. Brohm (1957:194) suggested that the village procession—with the hired costume, music, offerings and transport—is often left out 'for reasons of expense'; he described the most 'complete' novitiation (which cost a great deal) but also attended other ceremonies most of which had been cut in some way because of the inability to meet its expense.

The meditation centre novitiation

The novitiations I attended at the meditation centres were remarkably small in scale, and lacked the splendour of the monastic novitiation just described. Lasting one morning at most, these have most of the ritual and ceremony omitted, such as the procession around the neighbourhood, propitiation of supernatural agencies and the *beik-theik* ceremony. Though the novice is named with a Pali title, the naming ceremony is not an occasion for an offering on a

49 This was suggested in Nash (1965:125) and Spiro (1970:238,235).

separate day. It involves a reduction in 'pomp' because embellishments, such as music, royal dress, verses, and royal umbrellas are absent. The choice of witnesses is limited to relatives, friends and close acquaintances. No festival hall, orchestra, or master of the *beik-theik* have to be engaged; no horses, costumes or royal umbrellas have to be hired; fewer guests are fed; and the meals provided are reduced from three or four to only one. It is a rather dry and sober affair, inkeeping with the serious purpose for which the meditation centre was built. Novitiation is reduced to a skeleton of only three components: there is the ordination, the preaching of the monks, and the feeding of all monks and *yaw"gi* in the centre.

The two novitiations compared

Compared with the monastic novitiation, the meditation centre novitiation is attenuated because it reduces the 'pomp and ritual' of the conventional monastic novitiation. The novitiation is spatially reoriented, because, from a feasting hall and monastery as the focal points, it takes place predominantly at the meditation centre. It has also lost a dynamic quality because, unlike the processions of the monastic novitiation, there is not normally movement from place to place as part of the ceremony.

The meditation centre novitiation also involves an extension of the criteria for those eligible to receive offerings compared with the conventional monastic form. The meditator is a new category of person who—like the monk—is worthy of offerings. Though not necessarily invited by the sponsors, the meditator is nevertheless included at the offering for breakfast or lunch during the day of the novitiation. This is not because the sponsor feels obliged to feed the meditator, but because feeding meditators, like feeding monks, is viewed as an extremely meritorious act.

There are of course practical reasons why holding a novitiation should be preferred at a meditation centre. First, it is considerably cheaper; according to 1982 prices a proper conventional monastic novitiation costs not less than 8-9,000 kyats (over 600 pounds), but a respectable meditation centre novitiation can be performed at less than a third of this. Second, it is convenient to hold a novitiation at a meditation centre: there are more facilities than the monastery can provide, such as cooking utilities, dining halls, cheap labour input from people associated with the centre, and so forth, for which there is no charge.

However, while considerations of expense and convenience no doubt play their part, these are not drawn upon as justifications for holding a novitiation at a meditation centre by its sponsors. All meditation centre novitiation sponsors I met were relatively wealthy and could easily have afforded a full-scale novitiation as described above. Their opting for the more simple ceremony is more a reflection of their overall orientation towards meditation as the path of

Buddhist action, and the opinion that many aspects of the monastic novitiation are not meritorious.

The debate about the acceptability of a novitiation is cast, not in terms of expense or utilitarian ideas, but in terms of its 'otherworldliness' and the 'merit' it is likely to yield. Such an ideal was expressed to me by a teaching monk at a Ma-ha-si meditation centre, who said about the meditation centre novitiation,

It is essential to distinguish between "worldly ritual" (*law"ki min-ga-la*) and "otherworldly ritual" (*law"kot-ta-ra min-ga-la*), which are both involved in the novitiation. We do not allow much of this "worldly ritual" in our meditation centre. To our mind the essential thing is the actual ordination into novicehood, and you will find very few elaborate festivals held by parents of boys initiated here, even in their homes.

Let us look closer at some of the salient differences between the two—at the elements of entertainment and music, the supernatural, royal symbolism, and Hindu symbolism.

First, we have noted how entertainment is conspicuously absent in the meditation centre novitiation. Consider, for example, the attitude of a man, a regular meditator, who had sponsored the novitiation of a number of his grandchildren at a meditation centre,

An orchestra is one thing, and Buddhism is another. The orchestra is the equivalent of "suffering" (*dok-hka*). If one offers little to laymen, and much to monks, one increases one's share of "merit". A traditional novitiation is half pleasure and half "merit", while the one that I am holding is ten percent pleasure and ninety percent "merit". So cutting out the orchestra, does not mean losing out, and this is a suitable kind of initiation for the "saintly people" (*thu-daw-gaung*; a term often used for people who take Buddhism seriously; in this context 'a practitioner of meditation').

Music and entertainment are not only absent, but are officially prohibited; e.g. in the published regulations of the meditation centres (Tha-tha-na-yei" U"si" Hta-na' 1982:34, reg 195) and in the much earlier regulations of the Ma-ha Baw"di' meditation centre.⁵⁰ It is forbidden because it is 'pleasure' and because it interferes with meditation. Yet Wi'thu'da (1982:69-70), as spokesman for the conventional monastic novitiation, defended the conventional monastic perspective when he wrote that music is not traditionally incompatible with religious offerings.

Our ancestors in the Pagan Period (849-1287) not only entertained at monasteries and pagodas with songs and music, but they could even offer the twittering and buzzing of festivals and instruments...in modern times where it is not possible to do this like our Pagan ancestors, their offspring can only entertain the public with music and songs.

50 Music is included among 'the five charities which should not be given' (Aw-ba-tha 1975:432), namely: offerings of intoxicating substances such as spirits, alcohol and opium, offering of song, music and dance such as plays, puppets and entertainment; offering of a woman for purpose of gratification of sexual desire; offer by bestowing a bull in the midst of cows; and offering of wonderfully made fine arts and paintings in order to make sensual desire appear upon its contemplation. KN held that music should not be an integral feature of any novitiation, whether in meditation centre or not, as it destroys mindfulness of the offering (*tha-di' pyet thi*).

It is characteristic of the monastic novitiation that its elements are not generally explained with reference to the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'*, or even its commentaries, but to inherited custom. Wi'thu'da proceeded to argue that entertainment of the laity and music are not 'like mice droppings in the food of offering'.⁵² In the final analysis, he argued, merit is derived from the state of mind of the person who offers, and is not, as critics alleged, dependent on the nature of the offering itself. In the monastic novitiation, merit is held to be derived from the degree of the 'otherworldly' state of mind of the sponsor and its ritual context, not whether the offering itself is intrinsically 'otherworldly' in nature. Hence, in the monastic novitiation ceremony music partakes of the 'otherworldly' nature of the occasion, which is not the case in the meditation centre novitiation.

Second, there is a difference in attitude to the supernatural. We have noted two ways in which the supernatural is involved in the conventional monastic novitiation: there is the pacification of evil spirits,⁵³ and there is the propitiation of saintly and powerful gods for protection.⁵⁴ Indeed, not only does the conventional monastic novitiation incorporate such interaction with the supernatural, but the ordination itself is actually conceived of as a battle with the supernatural, for, 'When humans become monks, they are engaged in a battle with Ma Nat, and they have dominion over the battle field' (Wi'thu'da 1982:110-118).

If in the conventional monastic ceremony there is great emphasis on the struggle between Good and Evil in a personified sense, in the meditation centre all such references are suppressed. Here, 'evil' and 'good' are hardly referred to as embodied entities at all; only one's good actions will save one, and no propitiation to supernatural entities will do this. This ambiguity over good and evil is also evident in the term for Ma Nat, which could either be taken to mean the Evil One, as the ruler of the highest of the six Kamadevalokas, who possesses great power due to his past

52 See also end-notes, *pa-ra-mat-hia'/pa-ra-mat*.

53 During the *beik-theik* ceremony there are the demands for payment by a person, usually a member of the orchestra, who acts as if possessed, demanding money from the sponsors. During the *beik-theik* ceremony the *Jaya Mingala Gatha* is also recited, in which is recounted the eight famous conquests of the Buddha over Ma Nat as personified in Alavaka (a child-devouring demon), Nalagiri (an elephant who tried to kill Him), Angulimila (a robber), Chinchā (who claimed He had seduced her), Sadcha (the false teacher), two demons (in the guise of serpents) and Bako (a Brahmin) (Spiro 1970:242). The riding around the monastery twice during the village procession, 'is to keep away evil nats, who might be envious' (Nash 1965:129).

We find disruptive elements are being paid off in the ceremony. During the procession we find: the throwing of coins by the novitiates at their age-mates who are shouting verses, the paying off of the kidnappers of the novitiates, and the paying off of those who prevent the novitiates from entering the feasting hall on return.

54 Hla Pe (1984:46) put the placating of supernatural agencies before the *shin-byu'* as follows, 'we, the candidates, were not allowed to do anything that might damage our limbs or jeopardize our lives, such as climbing trees and swimming in the river. The elders explained vaguely that evil spirits might try to put us out of action to spoil the ceremony. They were, I believe, subconsciously thinking of the incident between Mara and the future Buddha.'

This is confirmed for Upper Burma, where, Brohm (1957:195) claimed, 'Throughout the ceremony it is considered taboo for the young participants to touch their feet upon the ground, and they are carried everywhere they go. Similarly, although no food is proscribed for boys and girls in the pre-initiatory period, there is a taboo against climbing trees or taking baths near pools or wells. This is a precaution which is taken, it is said, to avoid being pushed by Man Nat...either to death or serious injury.'



Photo 4. The Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw presides over a water libation ceremony at the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha after the donors completed their offering.



Photo 5. In popular Buddhism Mara's threat to the Buddha was unsuccessful because the Earth Goddess (Wa-thon-da-yei) interceded, who still had in her hair all the water from the many libation ceremonies held by the Buddha after the generous offerings in his previous lives.

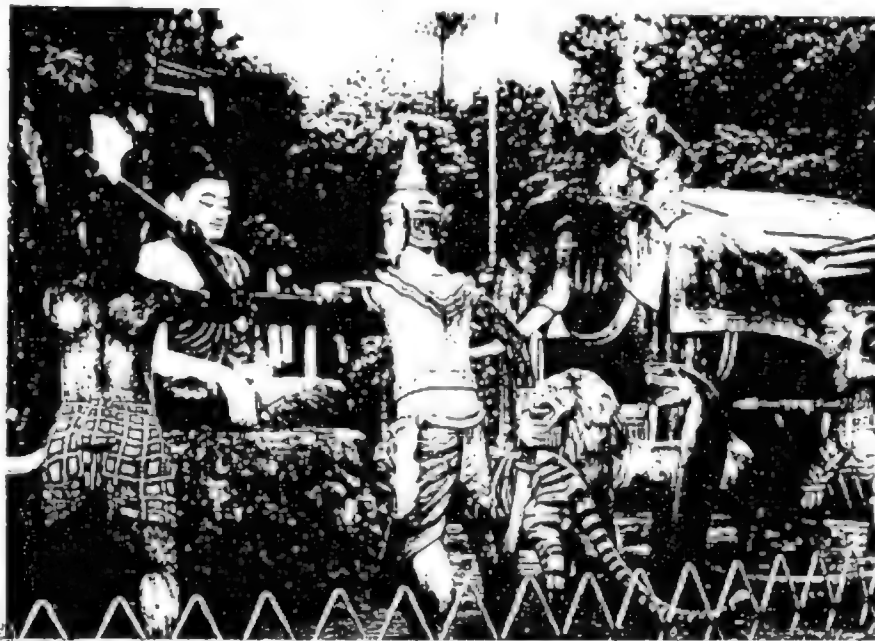


Photo 6. In the meditation centre explanation of the water libation ceremony, Mara and his army fled because the earth merely shook: there was no intercession by a supernatural deity on the Buddha's behalf.



Photo 7. Prince Wei-than-da-ra was the Buddha in his one life before last, during which he perfected the quality of charity, including the gift of his country's precious white elephant, his wife, and his children. In the meditation centre the analogy is drawn between the free pouring of water and the free offering of charity with an unclouded mind, the way Wei-than-da-ra poured his water at the libation ceremony. Here the symbolism of water does not extend to the intercession by the Earth Goddess.

acts of 'charity', or it could refer to 'evil', the general principle of attachment and clinging to life, the realm of sin, karma, death and rebirth (Childers 1909).

Nowhere is this contrast in attitude towards the supernatural more evident than in the water libation ceremony held at the end of the novitiation ceremony and at any other major offering. In the monastic ceremony, the water libation ceremony is apt to include reference to Ma Nat the Evil One challenging the throne of the Buddha. Ma Nat is chased away by the Earth Goddess who bears witness to the acts of charity of the Buddha by wringing from her hair the water from all water libation ceremonies performed by the Buddha after the many good deeds in his many former lives; this caused Ma Nat to scramble for safety. In meditation centres on the other hand, the water libation is apt to be explained not with reference to the Earth Goddess coming to rescue of the Buddha, but merely to the Earth trembling because of the effect of Buddha's merit. The preferential explanation given of the water libation ceremony refers to no encounter between Ma Nat and the Buddha, but to an act on the part of the Buddha of 'pouring water like the Buddha did in his last life but one as Wei-than-da-ra, signifying the offering without regret'. Here, the water libation ceremony is not to frighten away the Evil One, but is an 'offering without regret', a pure state of mind. Here evil is not embodiment in any specific sense, but embodiment as a principle; evil is not in creatures, but in the general nature of corporeal existence. The conventional monastic version of the libation ceremony is in the meditation centre context widely denounced as 'Hindu' in nature.

Third, there is a difference in the role of royal symbolism between the two types of ceremony. In the monastic novitiation novitiates wear royal dress, and are shaded by royal umbrellas. The 'festival hall' is an imitation of a palace.⁵⁵ The conch-shell involved in the *beik-theik* ceremonial, from which the novitiates are sprinkled with water, is symbolic of royalty (Nash 1965:130), and on entry to the festival hall the orchestra plays a tune 'which in the days of monarchy, heralded the arrival of royal presence' (Spiro 1970:242). Htin Aung (1962:119), made the claim that

colloquially...the phrase *shinbyu* means 'to make a monk', but it can equally well mean 'to make a king', and the term novitiate (*shin laung*) could mean 'he who would become a monk, but it could also mean 'he who would be a king'.

This claim is a little rash because, though the Burmese term for novitiation could mean 'becoming a king', it could also mean 'becoming a prince' or a minister or a spirit, and so forth. But Htin Aung does beg the question: does this complexity of royal symbolism mean that the novitiate is imbued with royalty in some real sense in the monastic novitiation?

It is important not to forget that novice- and monkhood were recruiting grounds for the personnel of the royal government: 'The records available tell us that officers were recruited from

55 e.g. Nash (1965:127) and Spiro both termed it a 'palace'.

ex-monks famous for their fighting contests' (Wi'thu'da 1982:62-3). Thi-la-nan-da (1979:7) claimed that with monastic education, 'one could achieve the ranks of minister, commander-in-chief, and high officialdom... that is why all those of rank and knowledge in the past came out of monasteries.'

Monasteries therefore served as the recruitment ground for the staff necessary for the perpetuation of the monarchy; this may explain how Royal support of novitiation was desirable. Indeed, 'those who were to become novices ... were formally proclaimed to be of "the Sakyan Race of Kings"', and '... parents and near relatives of new monks and novices were entered on rolls of one or another of the prestigious cavalry units and declared free of taxation' (Koenig 1978:264). Before the colonial period it was illegal to use royal symbolism without permission from the king, but the novitiates were in fact granted by royalty the right to use royal symbols. 'To wear a dress in imitation of the king's regalia and the robes of his officials was treason, certain to be punished with instant death', but 'the boy in a Shinbyu ceremony, and actors in a play, were exempted from the operation of this law' (Htin Aung 1962:119). Such elimination of royal symbolism in the meditation centre novitiation may therefore be related to the demise of the Burmese monarchy and the emergence of a new political order.

A fourth aspect missing in the meditation centre novitiation is the monastic novitiation's emphasis on Vedic and Hindu knowledge. Parts of the monastic novitiation perceived by the meditator as 'worldly' are so regarded precisely so because they are in some sense classed as 'Hindu'. First there is the Brahmin's involvement in determining the time for the novitiation ceremony on the basis of astrology, knowledge generally perceived as Brahmanical. Also, Wi'thu'da (1982:105-8) determines the best months for holding the novitiation ceremony as corresponding to the times at which a Brahmanical cord should be worn, and claimed that the reason why the Burmese hold the novitiation during the months of *da-bo'dwe*", *da-baung*", *da-gu*", *ka-hson*, *na-yon* and *wa-zo*, is because the results will be positive according to the Vedas, while for the other months it will be negative.

The Master of the *beik-theik* performs brahmanical ceremonial, and, as Wi'thu'da put it,

The capabilities of the one acting as a Master of the *beik-theik* are by no means few: he must be a good speaker and actor, must know the Vedas, must have learnt as much as possible about music both in terms of singing and instruments, and he must be capable of invoking a pious state of mind in the sponsors of the novitiates.

Music and entertainment are thus closely associated with the role of the Brahmin. It is the Buddhist equivalent of the Brahmanic ceremony of initiation as twice-born, during which the Brahmanical cord offered to the novitiate is to protect him against evil. The *beik-theik* ceremony also deals almost exclusively with the propitiation of spirits. Even the Buddha is in some ways treated as a spirit (Aung Chein 1978:124). Furthermore, the symbolism of royalty in the context

of the 'palace' and the fact that the *beik-theik* ceremony is also associated with ascending the throne, makes it a royal occasion. This ritual, combining the elements of entertainment and music, royalty and spirits all within it, is not just classed as 'worldly' but also as 'Hindu'. Spiro referred to such attitude in a footnote: 'The village 'Protestants'—as my assistant calls them—object to the orchestra on the grounds that it is Hindu, not Buddhist in derivation' (1970:238).

So far I have argued that the simplicity of the meditation centre novitiation cannot be explained only in terms of its utilitarian advantage and its cheapness; it is part of a recalculation of meritoriousness, moving from the definition of otherworldliness as 'state of mind' and ritual context, to intrinsic otherworldliness of the procedures themselves and the persons to whom offerings are made. The first allows the inclusion of potentially any procedure or object as meritorious, but the latter casts out many procedures or objects as intrinsically unmeritorious. Yet it would be wrong to argue that in the meditation centre novitiation elimination is arrived at by simple negation of these elements. Entertainment is part of the meditation centre novitiation, for guests are entertained with food. Brahmanic elements cannot be totally denied within any Buddhist ritual because so much of Buddhism is potentially also Brahmanic.⁵⁶ The water libation ceremony, which finds its origins in Brahmanic ritual, is always performed at the end of an offering. Furthermore, the existence of spirits is not denied in the meditation centre because, though spirits are not worshipped, they are sent loving-kindness (*myit-ta*) and merit is distributed to spirits at the end of every offering in the meditation centre. Also, worship of spirits is explained as more than just fruitless; worship of spirits by those of better morality can harm spirits, and the meditators have superior attributes of 'morality', 'concentration' and 'insight'. Sending loving-kindness and distributing merit is the only course of action open.

Conversely, the inclusion of these elements in the monastic novitiation is not necessarily because of a simple confusion of the 'essence' of Buddhism with 'worldliness' or 'Hinduism' on the part of monastic thinking. Indeed, it would appear that in many respects the very same criteria for the distinction between the meditation centre vis à vis the monastic—the isolation of certain events as 'worldly' and contradictory to the essence of 'otherworldly' Buddhism—are evident in the monastic ceremonial: the events of spirit worship, music, royal symbolism and *beik-theik* ceremonial are kept totally separate from the single event of ordination into the monastery. But, why should the event of ordination, which is what the novitiation is purported to be about, be taking place away from the eyes of the public at large?

56 See also chapter 6 on the distinction between 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-hsa*) vs WM.

The fact is that entertainment and music are quite clearly distinguished from the event of the ordination itself. Indeed the Brahmanic ritual is included in the '12 worldly rituals' (Aw-ba-tha 1975). Nor is the inclusion of Brahmanic elements in the monastic novitiation due to a failure on the part of its proponents to distinguish between 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism'. True, the monastic novitiation requires a Master of the *Beik-theik* who performs the ritual functions of a Brahmin, but when it comes to those who have little money it is acceptable that this ritual may be dispensed with, but never the ordination of the boy into the monastery. Furthermore, the master of the *beik-theik* is a Brahmin only in the context of the novitiation ritual, and the difference between him and the Brahmin is self-evident to all involved; he is definitely a Buddhist. In fact, we find that there is a remarkably clear sense of demarcation in the monastic between Vedic and Buddhist knowledge. This is evident in some of the explanations given of the novitiation itself. For example, after having traced the months during which the novitiation is held back to Vedic custom, Wi'thu'da (1982:105-8) noted that though in the Vedas the minimum ages at which the 'Brahmanical cord' (*sa-lwe*) are prescribed are 12 years old for the poor, but 8 years for Brahmins, and 10 years for kings, this is not applicable to the novitiation ritual: 'Although there is an age limit in Buddhism, this pertains only to the *Da-ma*', and has nothing to do with the world'. He furthermore stated that Vedic philosophy contains true and false elements, and—quoting the monk Mon-ywei Hsa-ya-daw—that there is no doubt that it is ultimately one's actions (*kan*) that determine the course of one's life, not astrology. Therefore, he started off with the argument that the novitiation is a life cycle ceremony which includes Vedic elements in it, but proceeded to delineate the limitations of Vedic knowledge in the context of the novitiation, and thereby established the novitiation ceremony as essentially Buddhist in nature, as 'having to do with the *Da-ma*'. Furthermore, he recognized that ultimately Brahmanism has to do with 'the world', but he used it to set Buddhism apart into the realm of the 'otherworldly'.

Conclusion

Historical events may have a much more immediate relevance to differences between the monastic and the meditator's novitiations than I have been able to show in this chapter. For example, a more precise assessment is needed of the role royalty had in perpetuating the novitiation ritual by sanctioning royal symbolism and allowing tax incentives to parents of novices; how did the disappearance of royalty affect the novitiation? Furthermore, the decrease in emphasis on the *beik-theik* ritual in the context of the meditation centre novitiation may be linked to the changed perception of Indians more generally as a result of the colonial experience briefly referred to in chapter 1: the virtual monopoly of the Indians on the financial market, and on jobs in the civil service during the colonial period; the bankruptcy of the Burmese farmer whose lands fell into the hands of the Indian money-lender during the 1930's depression; the

resultant anti-Indian riots in the competition for jobs; and finally the fight for Burmese independence as a separate country from India which dominated Burmese politics for the first half of this century, are worthy of closer examination. Finally, a number of these elements—such as the deploring of festivals and music in Buddhist ritual—need closer study, as these attitudes are also found in some monastic sects.

However, we can make certain observations about the differences between the two forms of novitiation. While in the conventional monastic form any attempts at *attenuating* ceremonial is considered shameful, in the meditator's form any attempts at *elaboration* is considered shameful.

If in the conventional monastic form merit is maximised through expenditure on the ceremonial as a whole, in the meditation centre participants are apt to be more discriminating as to what are 'worldly' and what are 'otherworldly' components.⁵⁷

Yet elimination of entertainment, royal symbolism, 'Hinduism', and spirits, from the meditation novitiation do not represent a straightforward negation, nor is the incorporation of these very same elements in the monastic novitiation by any means a matter of indiscriminate acceptance. In fact, one could argue that the meditation centre novitiation shows a more stringent application of the very same criteria involved in the monastic novitiation. The proponents of the conventional monastic and the meditation centre novitiation both agree that the novitiation ceremony is a ceremony of an 'otherworldly' nature, and that it earns merit beyond compare to other offerings. Both emphasise that sponsors have to be geared up for the occasion to maximise their merit, and should take the moral precepts before offering. Furthermore, both agree that some elements are more 'worldly' than e.g. the ordination ceremony itself. So their differences are in the application of the concept of the 'worldly'.

The term 'worldly' can be applied in many ways, such as 'state of mind', 'nature of offering', 'state of purity of the recipient of offering', and this usage in turn affects the concept of 'merit'. If in the conventional monastic rationale the 'worldly' elements involved in the ceremony partake from the 'otherworldly' nature of the occasion and add to the total store of merit earned,⁵⁸ in the meditation centre rationale merit is maximised by expenditure on selected parts of the ceremony so that the overall result—despite a lower overall outlay—generates more merit for all involved. To the monastic it is the state of mind that determines whether an offering is

57 See end-notes, *law⁵⁷kot-ta-ra⁵⁸law⁵⁹ki*

58 KN pointed out that 'merit' (*ku'tho*) is very much diminished if the motive for donating is not pure. Because in the conventional monastic novitiation the size and appearance of the ceremony is emphasised over the sponsors' motives, not only does a relatively low grade worldly type of merit result, but even this is in danger of being lost and one can accumulate *amerit* (*a-ku'tho*) instead. KN is of the opinion that this perception of worldly type donations such as music etc, which were forbidden by the Buddha, as otherworldly in the context of the *shin-byu* is similar to the early Ari monks of Burma who deflowered girls. He also found monks taking responsibility for policing various secular festivities wrong.

'otherworldly' or not; objects are not intrinsically excluded because of their 'worldly' nature, they are just separated from the other parts of the ceremonial and serve to structure the whole sequence of events, but still add to the 'otherworldly' nature of the novitiation as a whole. However, to the meditator, in addition to the mind having to be pure, the offering as well as the recipients of the offering must also be pure. Music, royal symbolism, spirits, and Brahmanism are intrinsically 'worldly' in nature, all being subject to impermanence, disintegration and suffering, and do not contribute to the 'otherworldly' occasion of the ceremony. Furthermore, expenditure on the laity, the master of the *beik-theik*, the orchestra, and so forth, is not meritorious because these people do not have the 'high moral, concentration, and insight attributes' that monks and meditators are supposed to have. Hence expenditure on them is not maximising one's merit.

Ambiguities exist despite a degree of shared understanding of the meaning of these terms, and any differences become apparent only in concrete ethnographic contexts. Both novitiation ceremonies are Buddhist and both operate with the same set of concepts, namely those of 'morality', 'charity', 'concentration' and 'insight'. Both wield the concepts of the 'worldly' and the 'otherworldly', and both wield the concepts of 'monk' and 'laity'. But while one legitimises itself in terms of the Pali Canon and its Commentaries, the other does so in terms of inherited cultural practice. In terms of the categories delineated in Chapter 2: one is about 'Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na*), the other is about 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da-ba-tha*).

5

The meditation centre: lay association or monastery?

In chapter 4 I drew attention to an argument between two relatives of a boy over whether his novitiation should take place in a conventional monastery or in the same place temporarily converted into a meditation centre. This chapter has two main aims. The first is to show that the process of decision-making in the meditation centre has been 'bureaucratised'; that is, decisions about access, day-to-day running, maintenance, etc, normally the prerogative of a couple of senior monks in the conventional monastery, have been usurped by complex networks of lay trusts, committees, and sub-committees.

The second aim is to elaborate the points first made in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 2 I concluded that to speak of WM as a 'laicised' Buddhism the way this has been done by some western scholars can be deceptive, and that the discourse of the WM meditator is highly 'monasticised'. In chapter 3 I disputed the view that WM constitutes a 'meditational revolution'

in Burmese Buddhism (e.g. Brohm 1957), and that WM, properly considered, is *not* revolutionary because it does not entail the radical displacement of old roles (monk) and old institutions (monasteries) by new ones. The centrality of the monkhood and of the monastery have not been challenged and, by aspiring to a Buddhism of the *than-ga*, the *yaw"gi* in fact perpetuates an old order of Buddhism.¹

The chapter is divided into two parts: the first focuses exclusively on discussion of the above points, while the second introduces the ethnography of one meditation centre, namely the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, to substantiate the points made.

The meditation centre and the monastery

My attempts to investigate a meditation centre by means of participant-observation were not very successful. I spent ten days in meditation at the International Meditation Centre in Hedington, England, following the Ba' Hkin meditation method, and soon after arrival in Burma I also spent two weeks in meditation at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha in Rangoon.² During my first two months of fieldwork I spent almost one month in meditation, yet found out remarkably little information of ethnographic value about WM.

One reason for this was the foreign component in these meditation traditions, which isolated me from what I considered to be 'authentic' ethnography, i.e. concrete information about the organisation of the centre, the lives of the teachers and the *yaw"gi*. At the IMC centre (both in England and in Burma) there were very few Burmese meditators and by far the majority were foreign. While the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha was full of Burmese meditators, I was not allowed to

1 Though WM could conceivably come to by-pass and subvert the monastic tradition because it does allow unordained to claim a degree of spiritual status not recognised before there are some serious impediments to this which are treated in the conclusion to Chapter 6.

2 I chose to study the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha because it is the head centre of about 300 affiliated centres, and teaches probably the most popular WM method in Burma today. Also it is one of the biggest meditation centres in Burma, both in terms of its size and the number of *yaw"gi* it takes in. It has a well documented history going back to Burma Independence day in 1948, and its significance had been noted in the Western literature by people such as Mendelson and King. It was also the centre pressed onto me by circumstances. By coincidence at least four members of my friends' family I was staying with in Rangoon turned out to be meditating in this centre. Also the Director-General of Religious Affairs had drawn my attention to it by giving me some of the Centre's publications. Finally, the Ma-ha-si TY was unique in the sense that the founder of the centre, the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, was still alive during my fieldwork, though he died soon after I returned to England. Few of the founding fathers of the other meditation methods were still alive. (U") Ba' Hkin, the founding father of the IMC, for example, had died in 1971, and the Centre was now being run by successors.

The BK sister centre in England, with which I initially familiarised myself, proved too unrepresentative for Burma. Though the method was relatively renowned in Burma—being derivative of Hsa-ya Thet-gyi", a lay pupil of the famous Le-di Hsa-ya-daw—its Ba' Hkin implementation was too oriented towards foreigners. Indeed, it had been named the 'International Meditation Centre' (IMC). This method had only one centre in Burma but many more outside Burma in India, England, Australia, and America. The only Burmese meditators at the centre were government accountants and their relatives and friends, but by far the majority were foreigners coming especially to Burma as it was the headquarters of an international network. Also, the IMC organised courses only intermittently, but not throughout the year. Considering my interest in a more 'authentic' Burmese tradition, the Ba' Hkin tradition was not suitable.

share accommodation with them; rather I had to stay in a separate hostel for foreigners. Apart from brief contact with Burmese meditators during meal times and communal meditation sessions, there was little occasion for interaction with Burmese meditators at these centres.³

A second reason was that it proved impossible to combine meditation with ethnographic observation. Neither centre allowed speaking, reading, or writing. At the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha I was encouraged to sit still without movement of any sort for one hour periods, alternated with periods of walking meditation. The regime was twenty hours meditation a day, with only four hours sleep. Yet I could not help sleeping six or seven hours a day. My curiosity to see what was going on in the centre clearly affected my ability to meditate, and when after a few days a foreign meditator was made to share my room, the distractions became worse. I could no longer convince the teachers who interviewed me daily that I was making any 'progress'.

So the meditation centre, where I had sought social contact and interaction, forced me into isolation: not only was I made to live in a world by myself, but it was also considered necessary to surround me with non-Burmese. Two weeks at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha were enough. I was keen to talk to someone. Everyone was busy either meditating or teaching and no one appeared to have time to talk except one old man who lived in the meditation centre compound. He had been a member of the BTNA administrative board during the (U") Nu' period, and was the only person in the centre who willingly took the time to talk to me. He explained how he wanted me to become involved in his missionary plans for the West. He wanted to send missions to the West like Christian missionaries had attempted in Burma, and hoped that the teaching of meditation and the distribution of Burmese medicine would make the West Buddhist before they realised it. However, after two days of visits to his room I was followed by the man-in-charge of foreigners, who informed the administration of my explorations. I was warned by the administration that I had violated the Centre's rules by not meditating. Of course, there were other reasons not given: the man I had spoken to was on the wrong side of the administration, and also my affiliation to the Department of Religious Affairs—which was in the process of reorganising the Buddhist order in Burma and all forms of religious organisation—may have caused some apprehension within the centre.

I was requested to leave the meditation centre, and whatever the exact reason for this, it was evident that at the meditation centre many obstacles had to be overcome to acquire the type of knowledge I sought. The technique of participant-observation could never succeed in such a short period of time. If I did venture to meditate seriously, a thesis might eventually result based

3 The importance of the foreigner to Burmese Buddhism has already been discussed in chapter 2 and the importance of the foreigner to the WM tradition will be further referred to in the context of the discussion on biography in chapter 7.

on vague memories of sensations in meditation reconstructed entirely from memory (remember the injunction against writing, speaking or reading), which could hardly count as a doctoral thesis in anthropology at a Western university. On the other hand, if I entered the meditation centre with only note-book and camera I would be unable to win over the teachers and the *yaw"gi*. Certainly my three-and-a-half week attempt at meditation had done little to disarm anyone. I was forced either to participate in solitary meditation, in which case friendships and contacts may eventually develop, but then again may not; or to observe, in which case I was likely to remain an outsider to the whole movement. Academic anthropology, I concluded, was irreconcilable with meditation.

My difficulties at the meditation centre stand in sharp contrast to my leisurely stay at a Mandalay monastery of the conventional type not dedicated to any particular activity save as a residence for monks. Had I chosen to study monastic life at such a monastery, instead of Buddhist practice at a meditation centre, I would have been spared many a painful struggle for 'solid' ethnographic information. In the Mandalay monastery, located within a kilometre of the old palace, I stayed four months with a room to myself, and was allowed complete freedom to establish unsupervised social relationships and to participate in all kinds of local activities.

The monastery was part of a larger monastic complex belonging to the Thu'da-ma sect, the largest monastic sect in Burma to whom a relatively relaxed attitude is attributed in respect to the monastic rules. I knew the monastery's chief occupant UP from my first visit to Burma in 1978, and during my second visit in 1979 I stayed in the monastery for several weeks. During my second visit, UP conceived of the idea that I should be ordained in the monastic order, like any normal Burmese boy would have been well before my age at the time (I was 22). And so sponsors came forward who donated my monastic requisites, including my robe (*thin-gan*) and my almsbowl (*tha-beik*).⁴ To begin with I was ordained a novice. After a day I was properly ordained in an ordination hall as a 'monk' (*u"ba-zin*),⁵ subject to 227 monastic rules (*Wi'ni*). I went out barefoot through town on almsround with my preceptor and fellow monks. I was no longer known by my Burmese name San^o Maung (I was never known by my 'English' name), but by my new Pali 'title' San-da-wa-ra'.

4 Of course there are no less than 8 monastic requisites (*pa-reik-hka-ya shi' pa*) (robe, bowl, thread & needle, mat, water filter, shaving blade, belt and slippers), but these need not all be given at every ordination because the monastery may have plenty of spare items. I therefore only received the robe, slippers, and the alms-bowl.

5 According to KN, *u"ba-zin* or *u"zin* is a Burmese (not Pali) term for monk; it is contracted from 'undergoing instruction from a preceptor' (*u'pyit-ze hsa-ya i a-hson" a-ma' go hkan yu thi*).

So UP was my 'preceptor' (*u'pyi-ze hsa-ya*) and publicly I was his 'disciple' (*da-byi*). I worshipped him not as a person, but as a member of the monastic order (i.e. his robes) whenever it was appropriate to do so, which was mostly when there were public around. At first it felt strange, going on my knees and bowing the trunk of my body down three times until my forehead touched the floor,⁶ an action that initially revolts, I think, anyone with an instilled sense of democracy (taking 'democracy' here to mean that inequalities should never be expressed publicly though one might admit that they exist privately). Our relationship was somewhat to the contrary, where we recognised an element of equality in private, but expressed the reverse in public.

I felt great friendship for UP, but never spoke of my feelings of friendship to him, nor in fact to anyone. It would have been inappropriate, and wrongly interpreted. A layman cannot be a 'friend' in the worldly sense (*meik-hswei*) of a monk,⁷ he can only be a 'pupil' (*da-byi*). I was aware that UP also felt friendship towards me, but was similarly constrained in his behaviour. Too easy interaction between us would draw comments from the neighbourhood, and would destroy his position in the community. I understood this from experience: soon after I was ordained, I invited my sponsor (a layman), whom I addressed by the title 'Royal Father' (*hka-me" daw*), to sit beside me on the concrete stairs leading up into the monastery, which created a flurry of concern with my 'Royal Father' and with bystanders, who instantly launched into an explanation of the inappropriateness of such an invitation, pointing out that he should sit lower than I.

UP was not formal or always serious, and had a good sense of humour. Without any need for prompting, he knew intuitively the kind of information I sought, and unsolicited he wrote two volumes on various subjects in Buddhism for me. On the other hand, there were some things I did not like in UP. He had once beaten one of his run-away novices so badly that he ended up in hospital, and while I was there he beat a visiting novice, a cousin of his, heftily with a

6 This is the 'Five Touch Worship' where: one's buttocks touch one's heels, one's elbows touch one's knees, and one's forehead touches the ground. The respect thus shown is not respect for the person but for the quality of the monastic order.

7 While 'friendship' would be the wrong term for a monk-lay relationship the term 'friend in the *da-ma*' (*da-ma' meik-hswei*) would be perfectly acceptable.

broomstick. But this sort of behaviour was an integral part of the monk-pupil relationship, and I had seen other monks beating their students also.

Monastery vs meditation centre

The differences in my experience of these institutions were due in part to my long-standing personal relationship with the abbot of the monastery. However, it may be argued that my personal experiences of these two institutions were symptomatic of differences in the institutions themselves. These 'real' differences gave rise to my distinctly different experiences of 'friendship' and 'scholarship' in the two institutions.

First, the meditation centre is a special abode which should not be prone to the Ten Impediments to Meditation,⁸ should not possess the Eighteen Faults⁹, and should be endowed with the Five Qualities pointed out by the Buddha with respect to all locations for meditation:

For this has been said by the Blessed One: 'And how, monks, is a dwelling endowed with the five qualities? Here, monks, a dwelling is neither too far nor too near, is easy of access, not crowded by day, with little sound or noise at night, scarcely exposed to gnats, mosquitoes, wind, heat and crawling creatures. Living in that dwelling a monk gets without difficulty the necessities of life, namely clothing, food, shelter and medicine...' (Pe Maung Tin 1921-5:142).

Being a special abode dedicated to a special purpose, the meditation centre is founded upon an awareness of the scarcity of time and resources, which is not the case with a conventional

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- 8 In *Visudhimagga* (Pe Maung Tin 1921-5:105-6) there is reference to the abode (an inner room, a cell, a monastery) among the Ten Impediments to meditation (the other nine being: family, gains, crowd, work, wayfaring, kin, ill-health, the book, and psychic power):
'This is not an impediment to all. But he who in regard to an abode falls into anxiety over making repairs and so forth or who has accumulated a bundle of personal belongings, or is interested in, enamoured of it for some reason or other—to him it is an impediment, not to another.'
- 9 The Eighteen Faults of certain monasteries when being used as an abode for meditational practice are given in *Visudhimagga* as follows:
'Herein a monastery possessing one or other of eighteen faults is unsuitable. And the eighteen faults are these: largeness, newness, dilapidation, dependence on a road, having a pool, proximity to a plantation of herbs or of flowers or of fruits, desirableness, dependence on a town or on a wood or on fields, presence of persons of dissimilar views, dependence on a port, or on a border-town or on the boundaries of a kingdom, unsuitableness, want of access to good friends. Possessed of one or other of these eighteen faults a monastery is unsuitable; where he should not live.' (Pe Maung Tin 1921-5:138).

monastery. In the monastery, the monk—though he would occasionally instruct his novices and preach to the laity—did not have great teaching obligations. Indeed, he had a lot of time on his hands, and was frequently somewhat bored. My company and lively interest were a welcome diversion to an otherwise somewhat humdrum monastic routine. By means of this personal 'friendship' in the Mandalay monastery I could claim time and resources. A room in the monastery was freed for my use; food collected in the almsround was gladly shared with me. In the meditation centre, on the other hand, there was a sense of urgency and scarcity of time: time spent talking is time foregone in meditation; this is a 'WM period' and one should not delay or put off meditation because it will become more difficult in future.¹⁰ There was also a sense of scarcity of resources: one should not be staying at the meditation centre unless one comes specifically to meditate, because that is what the laity have donated the resources for. Therefore, the monks in the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha could never be cultivated as leisurely social contacts the way I cultivated UP because they were so busy teaching that they had no time to socialise.¹¹ This, of course, is not to say that in the meditation centre there was no time for friendly interaction—indeed, one of the teaching monks helped me a great deal by distributing my questionnaires, and I had many positive and rewarding relationships with several teachers—but these were all somewhat hesitant compromises of the ideal situation of teaching and actively practicing meditation.

Second, persons associated with the conventional monastery and the meditation centre tend to have different notions about authentic knowledge: at the monastery pursuit of a wide range of knowledge was evidently considered intrinsically worthwhile, but in the meditation centre

10 A similar sense of urgency and calculation of resources is evident in the 'World Plan' of the Transcendental Meditation movement; see end-notes 'Transcendental Meditation World Plan'.

11 Another reason for the difference between the monastery and the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha was that the latter had been subject to what had been interpreted as 'adverse' publicity by foreigners. This reserved attitude on the part of the teaching monks about my intentions to write about the WM movement did not thereby only spring forth from the notion that my proposed methodology was wrong, as it had been exacerbated by past experiences with foreigners who had published criticisms about the Ma-ha-si and his methods. Many of those highly placed in administration and teaching at the centre feared adverse publicity. At least one publication in defence of the method taught at the centre was published (BTNA 1979b). This was mainly addressed to the same foreign audience which it was suspected I would address with my thesis. While understanding the fear of misrepresentation, it was sometimes exaggerated, e.g. one teaching monk complained to me about the account of Rear Admiral Shattock (1958:27) on his meditation experiences at this very centre because he had noted that there were 'a pack of a dozen or so mangy and wild-looking dogs of wolf-like appearance' astray in the centre. This, the monk commented, was no way to write about the centre. When I read the responses to the criticisms of the Ma-ha-si method, I recognised the monks' response to my fieldwork proposals. On one of the critics it was noted that 'had he practised with faith and ardour he would not have advanced adverse views' (BTNA 1979bix-x). The proof of the pudding was definitely considered to be in the eating of it, not in observing, gathering, and dispensing information about it.

the pursuit of only a very limited type of knowledge was considered worthwhile.¹² In the monastery my every question was taken seriously by the monks, but in the meditation centre questions about the organisation of the centre, and the way people experienced meditation, were all considered tangential to the knowledge they thought I *should* be seeking—‘If you meditate yourself you will find all answers to your questions’. In the monastery UP even wrote several essays in answer to my questions and typed them out ready for eventual publication, and any help I received from the monks sprung from the conviction that I was pursuing valid knowledge. Scarcity of time and resources at the meditation centre, therefore, would appear to have implications for notions of friendship and scholarship.

Yet the contrast between meditation centre and monastery must not be exaggerated. First, there is great variation in both types of institution. Not all meditation centres are necessarily the same. Certainly not *all* teachers and staff at the meditation centres were as time and resource conscious towards me as those of the Tha-tha-na’ Yeik-tha. For example, I subsequently visited the Ma-ha Baw“di’ Centre, where there was more sympathy towards my objectives and the time constraints I was under, and where my questions were given serious thought.¹³ Nor are all monasteries the same. There are many thousands of monasteries which are all quite different from each other, and not all freely share time and resources with the laity. For example, the Mandalay monastery was of the Thu‘da-ma monastic sect where rules of interaction with the laity are less strict, and time is less carefully allocated to scriptural study and meditation than in the monasteries of some other sects, such as Shwei-gyin and Hnget-dwin“.

Second, as suggested in chapter 4 about the novitiation ceremony, the separation between meditation centre and monastery is not complete. Some purpose-built meditation centres are permanently also monasteries; e.g. the Tha-tha-na’ Yeik-tha includes monasteries within its compound where monk teachers and students stay. Some monasteries, particularly in smaller towns and villages, are part-time meditation centres suitable for temporary residence and

12 The distrust of the type of knowledge I sought was found in critiques expressed about other foreigners who had written about meditation centres in Burma. For example, I received negative comments on King’s work on the Ba’ Hkin method: he was criticised for his writings because he had not shown evidence of being a proficient meditator (his wife, on the other hand, was) and because he was interested in the wrong aspects of WM. Also, at the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na’ Yeik-tha a teaching monk asked me whether I would write uncomplimentary things about the centre as Rear Admiral Shattock had done.

13 This attitude derived in part from their acceptance of my previous meditation experiences at (U“) Ba’ Hkin centre as providing sufficient qualification to confide in me (they were part of the same lineage); in part because they were keen to entertain foreigners because there were few around; in part because they were a centre run specifically for laymen; and in part because they were genuinely interested in my study of meditation in Burma, however intellectual it may have seemed. This centre had also received positive coverage abroad through Marie Byles’ books (1962, 1965), through which many foreigners had come to meditate. Lately foreigners had been few, and the urge to have more written about the centre was of positive interest to some of its occupants.

meditation by large numbers of laymen.¹⁴ The monasteries established abroad, such as the Vihara in London, also serve a multiple purpose and are used for teaching meditation to laity; here too trustees rather than the senior monk run the monastery. Finally, sometimes meditation centres become a part-time monastery only periodically; in lay-run and lay-taught centres, such as the Ma-ha Baw"di' Centre in Mandalay and the Ba' Hkin IMC in Rangoon, monk pupils are allowed to meditate over limited periods of the year.

In spite of this variation and, indeed, incorporation of one into the other, there is still a very real sense in which the contrast between meditation centre and monastery is valid. Even in the strictest of Shwei-gyin monasteries, such as the Amarapura Ma-ha Gan-da-yon Kyaung"daik, where I had stayed for a week in 1979, decisions to allow visitors to stay were at the discretion of the senior monk and there was no explicit rule that lay visitors may stay on the premises only if they pursue a single activity. On the other hand, all the meditation centres I visited have an atmosphere of industriousness about them, and have explicit, published rules and regulations about the comportment of visitors prescribing that they may only stay at the centre if they meditate.

The 'real' differences between monastery and meditation centre include the following. First, the meditation centre differs from the monastery in respect of purpose: it is designed for temporary meditational practice by as large a number of people as possible, whereas the monastery is designed for general purpose residence of a limited number of monks. It follows that they require different facilities. Monasteries normally have some form of spare accommodation available, and they may serve as a 'hotel' for pilgrims and travellers—even on business. But very few monasteries possess the facilities that designated meditation centres have in addition to the core of monastic buildings: ample facilities for the temporary residence of the *yaw"gi*; accommodation, assembly halls, dining halls, kitchens, toilets, administrative offices, surgeries, and so forth.¹⁵

Second, the need to coordinate the large turnover of meditators moving in and out, sometimes on a daily basis, means that there is a need for a large administrative complex not normally needed for routine monastic life. So, though monastery and meditation centres will vary a great deal from each other, depending on negotiation between different interested parties, there is a real difference here. If the monastery is a compromise between the codes of monastic conduct (*wi'ni*"), the aims of its monk occupants, the lay supporters, and any larger monastic sectarian

14 This process of transformation from monastery to meditation centre was described by Richard Gombrich (1983) in his paper 'From Monastery to Meditation Centre; Lay Meditation in Modern Sri Lanka'.

15 In chapter 4 it was noted how these facilities were convenient and cheap for the meditator to use in the novitiation ceremony.

movement of which the monastery may be part, then the meditation centre has an additional input to consider, namely the views of the trustees, the management committee, the meditators, plus the requirements for meditation as described in the scriptures and commentaries. Meditation centres such as the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha were tightly packed with lay committees busily arranging and dedicating scarce resources to the sole purpose of enabling people to meditate. In monasteries, on the other hand, one or at most two lay helpers (*kat-pi-ya*) provide for the monks, but monks tend to retain control and reserve decision-making over everything going on in the monastery who defer all decision making to the senior monks. But the committee structure at the meditation centre has introduced a power dimension which is controlled by the laity who define specific goals, implement them, and formulate constitutions and regulations. The senior monks will have some input here, but as they are so busy teaching, they tend to leave the laity to get on with it.

Meditation centre: reference and nomenclature

Having sketched these points of difference between meditation centre and monastery, it now remains to show how meditators, by adopting monastic language and classification, still aspire to a 'monastic' order of Buddhism in the ideal, though with some difference to suit their own purpose. In chapter 4 we have already observed that the novitiation remains an important life cycle ritual in the meditation centre. Furthermore, meditators may undergo periodic ordination as monks or nuns rather than remain lay persons. Here we will assess how *yaw"gi* adopt 'monastic' discourse, which includes: conceptions of the meditation centre as 'monastery', meditator as 'monk', property as 'monastic property', and gifts to lay meditators as equivalent to monastic 'offerings'.

There is no single concept in the Burmese language for 'meditation centre'. Instead, a number of compound nouns are commonly understood to refer to an institution where WM may be practised. These include: 'meditation-object monastery' (*ka-ma-htan" kyaung"*)¹⁶, 'meditation-object monastic brick building' (*ka-ma-htan" kyaung" daik*), 'meditation-object

16 Note that the Burmese term *kyaung* is used to refer to a 'school' as well as 'monastery', though the latter use of course predates that of the first.

pleasant-shade' (*ka-ma-htan" yeik-tha*)¹⁷, 'Buddhism pleasant-shade' (*tha-tha-na' yeik-tha*), and 'meditation-object place' (*ka-ma-htan" hta-na'*)¹⁸.

These terms are compound nouns combining various conventional designations for 'monastery' (*kyaung"*, *kyaung"daik*) and less conventional designations for monastery (*yeik-tha*), with terms for meditation (*ka-ma-htan"*). It is impossible to establish whether these terms refer to a modern meditation centre or to a forest monastery (*taw"ya' kyaung"*), and sometimes, when used in short-hand, such as 'pleasant-shade' (*yeik-tha*), one might confuse reference to a meditation centre with reference to an ordinary monastery.

The proper names of meditation centres are even more difficult to distinguish from those of ordinary monasteries. The principles of nomenclature are very similar for both, usually derived from location; after a village, a forest, a hill, a stream, and so forth. Knowing that today 'pleasant shade' has become almost a synonym for meditation centre, one might infer that names such as 'Bright rays of light *tha-tha-na* pleasant shade' or even '*Tha-tha-na*, conquering Evil One, pleasant shade' (*Tha-tha-na Ma aung yeik-tha*) refer to meditation centres, but one would be hard put to know from its name that Mandalay *kyaung"daik* (BTNA 1981:52) was a meditation centre, which indeed it is, and not an ordinary monastery.¹⁹

One might argue that such ambiguity in reference to a meditation centre signifies no more than that a meditation centre need be a monastery than does the equivalence between the modern term for secular schools and 'monastery' (both are *kyaung"*). But it might be equally well argued, for which there is more evidence below, that the conceptualisation of 'meditation centre' as 'monastery' is less the result of coincidental etymological continuity, than of a deeply rooted view that monkhood is about implementing the Buddha's teachings, and as meditation is the crux of this, monastic status can be claimed by all who pursue meditation, even by the unordained laity.

17 See end-notes, '*yeik-tha*'.

18 Meditation place' (*ka-ma-htan" hta-na'*) is the general term adopted in the BTNA (1981) in the sense of 'branch' or 'off-spring department' (*hta-na' gwe"*), i.e. a meditation centre falling within to orbit of control by a centre founded earlier. In the BK tradition the preference is for the term 'place' (*hta-na'*), as in International Meditation Centre (*A-pyi-byi hsaing-ya pa-di'pat-ti' lok-ngan" hta-na'*). This may have to do with Ba' Hkin's strong civil service background, for *hta-na'* is also used in reference to government or University departments, such as *naing-ngan-yei" hta-na'*, Dept of Home Affairs, or *myan-ma-sa hta-na'*, Dept of Burmese Literature. The same term *hta-na'* is used to make reference to a monastery in the sense of e.g. 'the departments where the Hsa-ya-daw resided' (Ko Lei" 1980:295).

19 By far the majority of the meditation centre names in the list of Ma-ha-si meditation centre include the term 'pleasant shade' preceded by either *tha-tha-na* or *da-ma'*, and a few use either 'cluster of monasteries' (*ky-aung"* *daik*) or 'department' (*hta-na'*), or a combination of the latter two.

Meditation centre property is conceived of as 'monastic' property. Mootham (1939:131-6) distinguished three kinds of religious property:

- (i) Public religious property, being property belonging to the public at large, such as pagodas,²⁰ resthouses, etc.
- (ii) Monastic property (*than-gi'ka*), belonging to the monastic order or monastery.²¹
- (iii) Private property (*pok-ga-li'ka*), belonging to an individual monk or to certain specified monks.²²

Generally, the nature of an offering is specified at the water libation ceremony, when the donor pours water to the recitation by monks. It is normally said about a donation that the water libation ceremony was performed 'private' (*pok-ga-li'ka*) or 'monastic' (*than-gi'ka*). A 'private' (*pok-ga-li'ka*) offering allows the recipient monk more control over it with less duties for maintenance, but on the other hand it is said to earn the donor considerably less merit than a 'monastic' (*than-gi'ka*) offering aimed at the whole order.

In the Ma-ha-si biography (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:185) we find reference to the buildings on the grounds as 'monastic' property (*than-gi'ka*). That a meditation centre, such as the Ma-ha-si's, which contains a large proportion of monastic buildings and where the teachers are monks, should be claimed to be 'monastic' is not surprising. Here, even if it includes buildings only utilised by laymen, it will have been offered to the monastic order with the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw as the guardian. But we find it registered in the history of the Ma-ha Baw'di' Centre (Ma-ha Baw'di' 1970:16), a centre entirely set up and run by the laity, that its property, too, is 'monastic' (*than-gi'ka*).²³ Indeed, virtually every *yaw"gi* I asked assumed as a matter of course that meditation centre property was 'monastic'.

A lay-run centre such as the Ma-ha Baw'di' is considered 'monastic' because the property is thought of as the property of the ordained monastic order (and all practicing *yaw"gi*), rather than, say, 'public' or 'private' religious property. Though there is a limited exercise of private rights over land,²⁴ all land except that dedicated to religion is ultimately the property of the state. Land

20 Pagodas need not always count as public property, for there are pagodas built by private individuals for their own use, or they may have been built by monks on the site of a monastery.

21 See end-notes, *than-gi'ka*.

22 Even this 'private' type of monastic property is not really *private* property, for it is tied to monastic office, and if a monk leaves the Order he must pass it on to another monk.

23 KN suggested that, had the Ma-ha Baw'di' centre been offered *than-gi'ka* to a monk first, who had then transferred rights of use to a lay committee, this property would have remained *than-gi'ka*. Though the Ma-so"yein Hsa-ya-daw and the Hsin-de" Hsa-ya-daw were invited to be the centre's spiritual leaders (*u" si" na-ya-ka*) (Ma-ha Baw'di' 1970:16), there is no evidence that the grounds had ever been offered to a monk and yet are still referred to as *than-gi'ka*.

24 Private rights over land are of three types: 'grant land' is the title to land offered by British and Indian government; 'land owned by grandparents' (*hpo" hpuw" paing myei*) concern land traditionally owned by the family; 'garden land' (*u"yin chan-myei*). These lands can be transferred, though the state remains the ultimate owner of all. Houses may only be built on the first two types of land, not the latter.

becomes 'religious land' (*tha-tha-na myei*) only if an ordination hall (*thein*) has been marked, which needs the permission of government.

Perhaps the most significant overlap between the role of the monk and the lay *yaw"gi* is the way many *yaw"gi* classify lay meditators as 'monks of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-ma-hta' beik-hku*), and as members of 'the monastic or order of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-ma-hta' than-ga*). There are two types of truth: conventional truth (*tha-mok-ti'*) is conditional on our senses and time and place, whereas ultimate truth (*pa-ra-mat-hta'*) transcends these. The former encompasses worldly knowledge such as culture and science, while the latter encompasses the knowledge of the Buddha's teachings as experienced through meditation. For example, there is a tendency among some *yaw"gi*, when talking in a confidential mood, to admit that many monks were more concerned with scriptural learning and arguing about 'conventional' truths than 'ultimate' truths. By referring to *yaw"gi* as members of the ultimate Order, it is established that meditation is what really matters in being a member of the Order, not robes, initiation, and knowledge of conventional truths.²⁵

A second classificatory term many *yaw"gi* were apt to use for themselves, and those who seriously meditate, is that they are 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) as opposed to 'outside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na a-pa*).²⁶ It is for example stated that BTNA members are 'Burmese inside Buddhism' (*bok-da'tha-tha-na-win*) nationals who are replete in the stated qualities'.²⁷ This also puts lay members in the same category as monks (BTNA 1979a:4).

Use of the monk's sacred vocabulary, normally only used to refer to attributes of or activities performed by monks, is also commonplace among unordained *yaw"gi*. I have overheard conversations between them where they used the following vocabulary: 'partaking of alms-food' (*hsun"za" de*) rather than 'eating' (*sa" de*); 'I have partaken enough alms' (*pyi' zon ba bi*), rather than 'I am full' (*taw ba bi*). Even terms of address were drawn from the sacred vocabulary by some: 'yes your honourable' (*tin ba*) instead of 'yes' (*hok ke*); 'Your holiness' disciple' (*da-byi'daw*) instead of 'I' (*kyun-daw*).

When I first met a nun at one of the meditation centres, she immediately asked me whether I had practised WM before. Upon informing her of having meditated at the Ba' Hkin centre in England and at the Ma-ha-si in Rangoon, I was immediately addressed in the monastic language I had heard lay *yaw"gi* use amongst each other, and she started using 'your holiness' disciple' to me, the monastic language for 'I' (*da-byi'daw*), and 'Lord' (*hpa-ya"*) instead of 'Mr.' (*hkin-bya"* for men, and instead of *shin* for women), and 'to place on the head' (*tin ba*) instead of 'yes' (*hok*

25 See end-notes, *pa-ra-mat-hta'*

26 For more detailed discussion on the terms *bok-da'tha-tha-na-win* and *bok-da'ba-tha-win* see chapter 2.

27 These qualities are mentioned in the section on the *Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha* below.

ke'). Also, I established that the numerative *ba*", normally limited to enumeration of kings, gods, monks, and sets of things, was considered acceptable for enumerating lay *yaw*"gi, instead of the numerative *yauk* used for ordinary 'humans'.

Parallels between the monk and the meditator are found also in general discourse. For example, one informant used the expression that 'The *law*"bet²⁸ is the 'flag' to the *yaw*"gi, the way the robe (*thin-gan*"') is to the monk'. Furthermore, the expression *taw*" *htwet thi*, 'to go out into the wilderness', normally applied to renouncing the world by ordination, has also been applied to entrance into the centre as a lay *yaw*"gi on a permanent basis (Ma-ha Baw"di' 1970:1), even if this meditation centre is located in a built-up environment.

There are a number of limitations on this use of 'sacred' language by the *yaw*"gi. First, while monks expect laymen to use sacred language to them by right, lay *yaw*"gi do not expect this. Second, many terms in the sacred vocabulary of monks, particularly the Pali ones, were avoided by the laymen²⁹ Third, when I asked in what context this language was considered appropriate, it was usually claimed that this was only appropriate when under the moral precepts within the meditation centre compound, but not outside it. Yet I have overheard its use by several *yaw*"gi amongst each other outside the meditation centre. Also, while it was claimed by some *yaw*"gi that usage was inappropriate if the layperson to whom it was addressed is not a meditator or is not keeping the precepts, in practice I found that they did not normally bother to find out whether the layperson had taken the precepts or not.

Offerings were considered in the monastic sense of the term as *a-hlu*, whether made to a monk, an individual lay *yaw*"gi, or to the meditation centre as a whole. The merit (*ku'tho*) derived is considered comparable to that derived from offerings to the *than-ga* (see chapter 4). Indeed, sponsorship is given to meditators as it is to ordained novices and monks: for example, food and medicine is given on a daily basis. Like any other major religious offerings to a monk or a monastery, a sizeable offering at a meditation centre is always accompanied by a water libation ceremony, where the presiding monk or lay teacher elaborates on the benefits accruing to the donor.

28 A strip of white or brown cloth worn over the left shoulder across to the right hip.

29 I have no explanation for this apparent avoidance of the Pali terms in the 'sacred' vocabulary, except to indicate that the distinction between monk and unordained *yaw*"gi is still maintained throughout.

The classification of meditation centre property and offerings as 'monastic' occurs even in the most lay-oriented centres. As lay *yaw"gi* told me on numerous occasions, the concept of the *than-ga* has been changed, including not only those ordained into the monastic order wearing robes and having a shaven head but also all those who practice WM. Lay *yaw"gi*, by classifying themselves as 'monks' and using the monastic language and classification associated with it,³⁰ maintain the 'ideology of Buddhism' as being the 'ideology of the monastic order (*than-ga*)', and believe that religious action can only be properly performed by members of the monastic order in its widest sense, including the themselves. Despite significant differences in purpose and organisational structure between the meditation centre and the monastery, therefore, the ideology at the meditation centre is 'monastic' and does not represent in this respect a revolution with respect to the monastic discourse of the old Buddhist order.

The realm of controversy

Nevertheless, it should now be pointed out that this monastic discourse by the unordained is extremely controversial when taken outside the meditation centre.³¹ Sacred language used with reference to ordained monks is never controversial. Admittedly, at the beginning of the 16th century a lawyer named Maung Kya Ban is alleged to have enumerated the monks present at an assembly with the numerative *yauk* (for unordained humans) instead of the *ba"* applicable for enumerating monks, royalty, and gods. When members of the public present asked him why he did this, he replied that if in early times saints (*ya-han"da*) were enumerated using *yauk* (which was indeed used in the old inscriptions), then these monks who had not even achieved this state of saintliness should certainly not be enumerated using *ba"*.

But such a critique of monks never gained widespread acceptance among Burmese Buddhists, and it is rarely encouraged by monks. The same numerative *ba"*, normally used to enumerate

30 Nyanaponika (1962:117,132n) pointed out that the term 'monk' (*bhikkhu*) means, according to the Commentary to the *Mahā-Satipatthana-Sutta*, a category of persons determined by practice as opposed to ordination: '1. Monks (Pali: *bhikkhave*; Sing.: *bhikkhu*). A *bhikkhu* is one who has received the Higher Ordination (*upasampadā*) in a Buddhist monastic order (*sangha*) that is based on the acceptance of the Code of Discipline (*vinaya*). In this context, however, the Commentary said: "Bhikkhu is given here as an example for those dedicated to the practice of the Teaching....Whosoever undertakes that practice...is here comprised under the term *bhikkhu*."

31 KN found the emphasis on meditator as 'monk' and the offering of gifts to unordained meditators as 'monastic' offerings exaggerated; he had less objection to conceiving the meditation centre as a monastery and its property as monastic property.

kings, monks, and deities has been claimed to be usable for WM lay *yaw"gi* by some lay *yaw"gi* at the Ma-ha Baw"di' Centre. At one point, one *yaw"gi* was writing out a water libation ceremony to be read by a visiting monk and, in order to prove to me that this numerative was appropriate for lay *yaw"gi*, he included this numerative in the reference to the *yaw"gi* instead of the conventional *yauk*, used for 'humans'. But when the *hsa-ya-daw* read out this text he evidently considered this to be an inappropriate use of the language, because he changed the reference to the usual way of enumerating humans, namely *yauk*.

Most people not closely associated with the meditation movement find the *yaw"gi*'s use of monastic language peculiar, if not controversial.³² For example, several monks in the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha did not object to their lay meditators claiming the idea that they too were 'inside the *tha-tha-na*' (*tha-tha-na win*) or 'monks of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-ha' beik-hku*), but a monk-informant not associated with WM took exception to this language use, commenting sarcastically that the Ma-ha-si was merely allowing their *yaw"gi* to believe that this was true in order to receive more 'charity' (*da-na*). Also, my non-meditating monk informant was of the opinion that 'monastic property' (*than-gi'ka*) referred only to property which had been dedicated to the *than-ga* in the sense of a community of properly ordained men, and he pointed out that the Ma-ha Baw"di' Centre could not possibly be 'monastic' since its *yaw"gi* were not properly ordained *than-ga*.

In chapter 2 it was noted that there were competing ideas as to what constitutes membership of the *tha-tha-na*. Monks are unambiguously members of the *tha-tha-na*, and privately, though not publicly, nuns also claim to be members. Monks use the criterion of ordination by an unbroken lineage of monks; nuns use the idea that they have renounced the world, shaved their heads, taken up robes, and have a Pali 'title' as the criteria. Lay *yaw"gi*, on the other hand, use the practice of WM as the criterion of membership.³³ The point, however, is that all religious

32 Such controversy over the use of monastic language and classificatory terms is not limited to the meditation movement. Some aspects of this controversy had already been noticed by other observer in a somewhat different context. Mendelson (1975:302) noticed controversy in the classification of property during his stay in Burma:

'There was constant disagreement over habitation rights in the Sangayana hostels at Kaba Aye, with a traditionalist party, mainly centered in the Buddha Sasana Council, refusing to allow lay people to live in buildings which had, during the Sangayana, served as monasteries [i.e. were *than-gi'ka*]. (One of the first suggestions put to me by the director of the Institute was that I should ask to live in the hostels as a test case against such traditionalists.)'

33 This shift in classification is well illustrated by a remark from a meditating informant:

'Anyone who meditates WM is inside Buddhism (*tha-tha-na win*). We have a little rhyme: "dress and shaven head don't count, but heart and mind do".'

The shift in classification of 'inside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na win*) from signifying 'those ordained' to 'those who meditate' is also applicable to classification of those 'outside the Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na a-pa*). Thus, while to most monks the term 'outside Buddhism' (*tha-tha-na a-pa*) comprises all who are not monks (i.e. the unordained), to the lay meditator these comprise those who practice 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-ha*) without the aim of crossing over to WM, generally classified as a worldly activity, in addition to those who do not meditate at all.

roles, whether they be monks, lay *yaw"gi*, nuns or hermits, aspire to membership of the *tha-tha-na* on their own terms.

But even in centres run by laymen, such as the Ma-ha Baw"di', monks are indispensable because they propagate the rarefied and uncontaminated knowledge of the *tha-tha-na* without which there would be no Buddhism now. The rules of the monastic order are the ultimate rules according to which the lay members measure their own morality, and offerings to monks continue to be part of the routine of the Ma-ha Baw-di' centre. All meditators, without exception as far as I know, still subscribe to the ideal that their male children must be ordained into novicehood, and many novitiation ceremonies take place every year, even in the most lay-oriented centres. If there are no monks living in the meditation centre, the ceremonial will be held in the centre, and the ordination itself in a nearby monastery. Furthermore, many lay meditators become monks themselves for a period of time. Both Ba' Hkin and Hsa-ya Thein", the founders of two lay-oriented centres, took up the robes before they died. Indeed, because it is considered very difficult for a lay teacher to find a proper successor, and to maintain order in the centre without the authority of the robe, lay centres are under pressure to change from a lay teacher to a monk teacher, or at least to incorporate some monks into the centre.

Therefore, though the *yaw"gi* may lay claim to a common heritage with the monk, this claim is disputed in the wider arena of Burmese Buddhism and has no widespread public support. I shall now turn to the analysis of one particular meditation centre, namely the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, which we have seen in chapter 1, Mendelson referred to as a 'government' institution.

Ma-ha-si's meditation centre (TY), its parent organisation (BTNA) and its government offspring (BNTA)

The most powerful Burmese meditation centre, nationally and internationally, is undoubtedly the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha in Rangoon, or, as it is also referred to after its head teacher, the Ma-ha-si Yeik-tha.³⁴ Expansion in the number of Ma-ha-si meditation centres has been rapid but irregular. During the ten-year period between 1938 and 1947 in the early phase of the Ma-ha-si's teaching career, on average one meditation centre was opened every three years in different parts of the country. But once the Ma-ha-si was invited to teach under the umbrella of the Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe' (BTNA) in 1947, growth accelerated, culminating in a total of 293 centres by 1981 in Burma alone; additional centres opened abroad in Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, England, the United States, Japan, France and several other countries. The claim is made that by

34 The life of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, the monk with whom the centre is associated, is described in chapter 8.

1981 well over half a million (661,049 *yaw"gi* to be exact) were taught in the Ma-ha-si tradition in Burma alone (BTNA 1981:89-99).

The Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha is closely associated, indeed, originated from, organisations founded and sponsored by Burmese government at high level. It was originally conceived as the headquarters of the BTNA³⁵, a national Buddhist organisation founded in 1947 by a formidable array of politicians—including Prime Minister (U") Nu' and three other cabinet ministers—and several rich traders and industrialists. During this first meeting the BTNA aims were declared:

1. To work in order to establish and make flourish Buddhism (*bok-da'tha-ta-na*).
2. To work to edify to utmost ability 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yai-ti*) and 'meditation' (*pa-di'pat-ti*).
3. To set up a Buddhist library (*pi'ta-ka' daik*) in various languages (see (2):16-17; Mendelson 1975:266).

Furthermore, the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha was also the headquarters of all early Buddha Sasana Council (BNTA) activities until a building was constructed at Ka-ba Ei", Rangoon.³⁶ The first inaugural meetings of the BNTA took place in 1950 at the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha.³⁷ The BSC [BNTA] Bill was drafted by U Chan Htoon in coordination with PM (U") Nu' and was first publicly presented at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha in 1950.³⁸ (Sir U") Thwin, president of the BTNA, also became president of the BNTA, and other names were to be found as members of the boards

35 See end-notes, 'BTNA'.

36 To emphasise this BNTA-as-originated-from-BTNA, Mendelson (1975:315) referred to the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha as 'the BSC [BNTA] Thathana Yeiktha Centre at the Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Ahpwe [BTNA] headquarters in Rangoon'.

37 Mendelson (1975:268) and *Light of the Dhamma* 1, no 1 (1952):30-34.

38 Mendelson (1975:266).

on both organisations (e.g. U San Thein). Only in March 1952, after two years of close coordination with the BTNA, were the BNTA headquarters finished and the organisations separated.

The BTNA participated in setting up events and organisational structures which were later on taken over by the BNTA. For example, it helped to organise the Sixth Synod, and to find a *Ti'pi'ta-ka'da-ra' Hsa-ya-daw*³⁹, until responsibility was handed over to the Executive Council of the BSC [BNTA] in 1951.⁴⁰ The *Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw* was personally involved in the Sixth Synod to the extent that he went abroad to enlist foreign support and served as 'questioner' in the Pali text revision at the Sixth Buddhist Council.⁴¹ The BTNA also sponsored the Burma Hill Tracts Buddhist Mission (TTA), an organisation founded to 'bring about unity and cooperation between the peoples of the Plains and the People of the Hills', until this was actively pursued by the BNTA from 1952 onwards.⁴²

In sum, the TY falls under the umbrella of the BTNA, which, together with the BNTA, were, as Mendelson observed, 'fiefs' of the Nu' faction within the Burmese government. (U") Nu' led a faction which favoured the integration of Buddhism with government, whereas (U") Tun Pe⁴³ and the army⁴⁴ lead factions opposed to this. In 1962 the Revolutionary Council, consisting entirely of army officers, abolished the BNTA.⁴⁵ Yet the BTNA, along with other private Buddhist

39 Mendelson (1975:267) wrote about the BTNA's involvement with the Sangayana in looking for a monk who knew the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'* by heart. 'From the start, the BSNA [BTNA] promoted activities that were central to the Revival and the Sangayana. With great excitement and effort, it sought and discovered a *tipitakadhara*, a monk who could recite the entire Pali Tipitaka from memory: in February 1954, some three months before the opening of the Sangayana [Buddhist Synod], the venerable monk U *Vicittasārabhivamsa* conquered the last of the texts and became capable of acting as "replier" during the purifying of the Pali texts at the Sixth Buddhist Council meetings.' (*Sangayana Monthly Bulletin* no 11 (Mar 54):2, 2 no 2 June 54:22.)

40 Mendelson (1975:268-9).

41 Mendelson (1975:268). The *Ma-ha-si* later also became a member of the Supreme Sangha Council.

42 Mendelson (1975:267). The TTA developed out of the *Maha Sangha Ahpwe* at the end of the war, as an attempt to missionise potentially refractory minorities in outlying areas of Burma.

43 Smith (1965:183) noted some criticisms of (U") Nu' by U Tun Pe. U Tun Pe criticised him for having 'become the *de facto* minister of religious affairs and that the religious affairs department was the most favored department in the secretariat.' (U") Nu' allowed Socialist Party leaders of AFPFL 'a free hand in the formulation of economic policy in exchange for their support of his religious policies and programs'. 'U Tun Pe charged that U Nu was under the powerful influence of the sayadaws and ex-monks who gathered at Sasana Yeiktha, the monastery which served as the temporary headquarters of the Buddha Sasana Council. The advice of the AFPFL and even Parliament was as nothing "compared with the persuasive whisperings into the PM's ears at Sasana Yeiktha just as old Burmese queens did during the (sic) precious time of combing the hair of the kings."' (U Tun Pe, *Why I resigned from the Cabinet*, Daily Herald Press, Ltd., Rangoon, 1953, p.7).

U Tun Pe also criticised the large expenditure from the public treasury on the Sixth Great Buddhist Council and on the proposed Buddhist University.

44 There was also rivalry between the BNTA and the army as evident in the conflict between the BNTA sponsored Dhammahduta College versus army sponsored Institute of Advanced Studies (see Mendelson 1975:300-304).

45 The Buddha Sasana Council (Amendment) Act no 6 by which the BNTA was abolished (Smith 1965:285; re *The Guardian*, May 18 1962). Smith said about this, 'Thus, the organization which U Nu had created to promote the revival of Buddhism in Burma was destroyed by a stroke of Ne Win's pen.'

organisations, such as the Young Mens Buddhist Association (YMBA), have been allowed to continue their Buddhist missionary activities; these organisations were still thought to be a useful antidote to communism.

The foundation of the TY

The history of the TY shows that the centre was inspired more by the ideal of service to all laity who needed Buddhist education after the onslaught of colonialism, than by acts of devotional charity to an individual monk of great stature.⁴⁶ Most BTNA meetings took place at the residence of Prime Minister (U") Nu.⁴⁷ Also, it should be noted that there was an association between its foundation and National Independence, as evident from the 'coincidence' of the final recitation with the first anniversary of Independence Day on 4 Jan.⁴⁸

Without anyone contriving to associate the recitation festival (*pa-yeik yut pwe*) with the matter of independence, the coincidence of the last recitation festival day with Independence Day should be taken as a sign that Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) is to thrive extensively.

Eleven months later (4 Dec 1949), Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha was officially opened to meditators (BTNA 1958:28).

It was only 19 months between the conception of the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha and its official opening. The Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha had neither been conceived for or dedicated to the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw prior to building. Indeed, the influential BTNA lay committee was set up, rules were established, buildings were erected, and only after that was the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw selected as chief occupant. The order of events is unusual; while monasteries are normally built after a relationship has been formed with a particular monk who agrees to inhabit the monastery, in

46 The account of the meetings were taken from sources (BTNA 1958:15-28) and (BTNA 1981:49).

47 Certainly the 6th, 8th and the 10th meetings.

48 See end-notes, 'BTNA'.

the case of the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha the Ma-ha-si did not know he was to come and teach until *after* the BTNA was conceived and *after* the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha had been built. The inauguration ceremony of the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha began on 16 Nov 1948, yet from the Ma-ha-si biography it is clear that the Ma-ha-si did not know that he was to become head teacher until November the following year, when (U") Nu' visited the Ma-ha-si at Shwei-bo, while he was in temporary residence at one of his meditation centres, and invited him to preach in Mandalay and Sa-gaing", and finally at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha in Rangoon.⁴⁹ So though the overall theme is a familiar one—wealthy patron (Sir U" Thwin") meets an exceptionally clever monk (the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw) and decides to sponsor him, which turns into a historical relationship⁵⁰—such sponsorship in this case occurred after conceiving the goal in the context of the two other ambitious aims above, after setting up an infrastructure to achieve it, and in the context of decision-making by a large lay committee, and after an element of competition was introduced by members of the committee auditioning different monks.

Therefore, the TY and its associated meditation centre were the result of a collective 'charity' intended by a collectivity of Buddhists for a collectivity of both the Buddhist laity and the foreigner. In contrast, the establishment of a monastery is not generally strived for by enduring associations, but is achieved by private (or perhaps shared, family) acts of 'charity' inspired by devotion to an individual monk. In meditation centres, all major offerings were offered as 'monastic' (*than-gi'ka*), i.e. to the collectivity of monks, whereas one finds that many offerings at monasteries were offered 'private' (*pok-ga-li'ka*), i.e. to individual monks.

49 On 9 Nov 1949 the Ma-ha-si left by plane for Sa-gaing" and preached there. On 10 Nov 1949 the Ma-ha-si left by plane to Rangoon to teach at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha. He was fetched at the airport by (Sir U") Thwin" and BTNA officials.

50 There is no record of anyone worrying at the BTNA meetings as to who should become abbot at this new centre. Yet it was known that (Sir U") Thwin" had heard of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw during a trip to Upper Burma as early as July 1947, had met him in person on 3 Aug 1947, and would appear to have canvassed his appointment with PM (U") Nu' on 6 Sep 1948 (Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha 1974:104).

In the biography of the Ma-ha-si (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:7) we saw how the Ma-ha-si's lay name was the same name as that of (Sir U") Thwin", both were called Thwin, and that the Ma-ha-si's brothers and sisters also have names ending with 'In' (Tin, Hkin, Hmin, Ba' Yin, Thin):

'I do not believe there is anyone who can contradict that having been named like this is an early omen of events to come' (i.e. his relation with (Sir U") Thwin as a major donor.)

The episode in which (Sir U") Thwin invited, assessed, and met for the first time the Ma-ha-si, gives a clue to what had been hinted at earlier (on page 7). (Sir U") Thwin decides that the Ma-ha-si is the perfect teacher, 'People who are the warp and woof like this cannot be ordinary people. They can only have 'come with drops of water' from former lives. As soon as Thi-ri'da-ma-thaw"ka' Min"gyi" saw Ni'gyaw"da' novice, he respected him, and they were friendly towards each other. But this was not without a cause, but due to acts of merit in a former life when the novice was the elder brother and the king the younger—it was because they were brothers like this.

Now also, as soon as (Sir U") Thwin" met with the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw he respected him. These two persons would go on to light up the Burmese *pa-di'pat-ti*'. Thus, who can say that these two persons were not either related as brothers or as close family in former lives? This agrees with the similarity of the Hsa-ya-daw's name in youth and the Rich Man's name' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:61-69).

Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha administration

Min" Hswei, the BTNA Secretary, commented that 'if the tiger is big, it will have big foot-prints'.⁵¹ So the BTNA main board of trustees heads a vast and complex network of no less than thirteen separate associations and committees, and over a dozen sub-committees, comprising well over 500 working members and many thousands of associate members. Quite unlike the conventional monastery, where one might find one or two lay helpers (*kat-pi-ya'*) or perhaps a roster for laity to take turns in administering to the needs of the monks, the 'laity' figure prominently in administering the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha. During 1980-1 the Centre employed 29 people.⁵² The TY and its BTNA umbrella organisation may be the most complex in the country, but such lay committees taking responsibility for the day-to-day running of the centre were a common feature at all meditation centres, rarely if ever of conventional monasteries.

The main board of trustees

The main BTNA Board of Trustees (*a-hmu' zaung a-hpwe'*) includes no ordained monks and has overall responsibility for all administrative aspects of the centre. They set up the regulations and rules for membership, the responsibilities and such like, of this complex maze of committees.⁵³ Also, they formulate rules and regulations for meditators and visitors, decide who may enter the centre for what purposes. The Board has the power to appoint sub-committees, change rules and regulations, and has responsibility for maintenance and repairs to all properties on the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha estate (including buildings, roads, wells, trees), and for the electricity and water supply, sewage, and for taking action to be taken against indiscipline in the centre. They are responsible for the general health and well-being of the *yaw"gi* on the estate, and receive and maintain records of donations made to the centre. No property may be built on the estate without offering it to the BTNA, and no permission is given for the alteration or addition of any buildings or property without first notifying the Trustees. No *yaw"gi* were allowed to make their living in the centre, live with their family, or be permanently resident. No *yaw"gi* may be in the centre for more than three months unless special permission is obtained.

51 BTNA (1981:32).

52 These worked under 12 different assignments, and three worked full-time. The total wage bill for 1980-1 amounted to a hundred thousand kyats (roughly 8,000 pounds at official rates of exchange) (BTNA 1981:32-7).

53 These were published in a 37 page booklet (BTNA 1979a). The rules specify minimum periods of notice and minimum numbers of members present for meetings, so that it is difficult for a small group to influence decision making by calling sudden meetings.

The Board of Trustees has 21 members, to whom all committees and sub-committees were ultimately responsible.⁵⁴ Trustees are elected yearly⁵⁵ from a much larger group of 'ordinary' (*tha-man a-hpwe'win*) and 'life' (*ya-thet-pan a-hpwe'win*) BTNA members.⁵⁶ The Board of Trustees has control over the number of BTNA members, and reserves the right to refuse membership (BTNA 1979a:4-5). During the first BTNA meeting it was agreed that trustees should have certain qualifications. First, they should be at least 45 years but under 75 years of age (BTNA 1979a:37). Second, no members of the Trust and sub-committees may carry any responsibility in other comparable meditation organisations outside the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha (Regulation 23, BTNA 1979a:27). Finally, trustees should have the following qualities:

- (a) they should respect Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*);
- (b) be replete with 'worldly' and 'otherworldly' knowledge;
- (c) not drink alcohol;
- (d) not gamble;
- (e) 'spend per month at least the full and waning moon days and two other days of own choosing observing sabbath' (BTNA 1958:17, BTNA 1979a:5).

The division of responsibilities of the Board of Trustees is not unlike that of any western form of organisation. They elect among themselves: a President, two Vice Presidents, a Secretary, a Joint Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Auditor (art. 7, BTNA 1979a:6-9). They meet regularly every month, and call special meetings when necessary. A yearly meeting is held for all BTNA members between 15 January and 31 March (the financial year runs from 1 Jan-31 Dec), for which the Board of Trustees has the responsibility to prepare a financial report, and to prepare the minutes. At these yearly meetings, special committees are set up, which have at least a president and a secretary in addition to ordinary members, and at least one Trustee must be represented on these committees (Regulation 18, BTNA 1979a:24-5).

Hi'tei-thi

Another important committee is *Hi'tei-thi*, founded by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw in 1968. As the Pali name implies, this organisation 'seeks to benefit others' (*Hi'tei-thi* 1981:4).⁵⁷ It has a committee of 21 Trustees, and a considerable capital income.⁵⁸ It works through the following sub committees, which have to do with the 'Seven Meritorious areas of Work' (*Hi'tei-thi* 1981:43):

54 Rule 11 and 13, (BTNA 1979a:15-6).

55 See end-notes, 'BTNA trustees'.

56 The ordinary member makes a two kyat contribution a month to the centre, and the life member makes a one time payment of two hundred kyats.

57 *Hi'tei-thi* boasted 17,892 members, of which ordinary members number 14,677, and life members 3,215 (*Hi'tei-thi* 1981: App. ga).

58 *Hi'tei-thi* received 508,589 kyats (over 39,000 pounds) during the year 1980-81.

- (i) Food offering voluntary workers' committee—has five members, and organises the daily preparation and offering of free food for between two and three hundred *yaw"gi* (Hi'tei-thi 1981:25-6).
- (ii) Committee in charge of looking for financial support—has nine members, and makes use of festivals and special days, such as the Burmese New Year, to 'rouse, urge, and preach to benefactors and distribute urging leaflets' (Hi'tei-thi 1981:27-28).
- (iii) Committee responsible for maintenance and repair of buildings—takes care of a restricted number of buildings associated with Hi'tei-thi only. Has five members (Hi'tei-thi 1981:29-30).
- (iv) Committee organising the ordination of monks, novices and nuns—consists of seven members, and 'does its utmost best to help and work for matters pertaining to merit of the (Hi'tei-thi member) families' and 'therefore to initiate the jewels of sons and daughters of the noble Hi'tei-thi members of the Buddhist lineage (*bok-da'ba-tha-nwe*)..'. In total during the year 1980-1, 75 monks, 92 novices, and 3 nuns had been initiated (Hi'tei-thi 1981: App. *hka'*, *ga'*:3).
- (v) Committee responsible for dispensing medicine—consists of four members, and is responsible for offering medicines to 10,979 meditating *yaw"gi* during the year 1980-1 (Hi'tei-thi 1981:33-5).
- (vi) Committee organising sabbath days—consists of six members, and cooks for *yaw"gi* observing sabbath at a cost of 3 kyats per person (Hi'tei-thi 1981:36-7).
- (vii) Committee responsible for the Saturday preaching—consisting of 7 members, this committee is responsible for the organisation of Saturday preaching (organised since 1976) by monks from the centre at the Hi'tei-thi Da-ma-yon. Buses were hired to fetch *yaw"gi* from various parts of Rangoon.

Women's Yaw"gi Caring Association

A third major committee is the Womens' Yaw"gi Caring Association (*A-myo"tha-mi" Yaw"gi Saung'shauk-yei" A-hpwe'*), an all women committee responsible for looking after female *yaw"gi*. Set up on 21 May 1978, it has a membership of 27, plus three honorary trustees, three standby trustees, and five *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw* (BTNA 1980a:74-81). It is subdivided in five sub-committees:

- (i) One committee responsible for arranging and placing female *yaw"gi* in accommodation.
- (ii) An auxiliary committee (*lan"hyun ku-nyi-yei" a-hpwe'nge*), helping to prepare the food on festival days and at ordination ceremonies for groups of between 500 and 5,000 people.
- (iii) Committee responsible for cleanliness and hygiene, including prescription of medicines and keeping the twenty-acre estate clean.
- (iv) Committee seeking financial offerings, which collects all offerings for water, electricity, sewerage, money trees in support of *yaw"gi*, and various other offerings pertaining to monks (*ka-htein*, and the *aw"wa-da'*).
- (v) A committee responsible for organising offerings of *hsun*" (food and medicines) (BTNA 1981:64-9).

The BTNA main office and the women's association were situated in the office block near the entrance, while Hi'tei-thi has a separate office near the dining hall at the back of the centre. All

three committees elect advisors (*lan" hnyun'na-ya-ka'*), usually prominent members in Burmese society.⁵⁹

Other committees

Other committees functioning during the year 1980-81 included the following: a Scriptural Learning and Practice Missionary Works Committee, responsible for publications and organising Ma-ha-si's trips abroad⁶⁰; Committee Seeking Financial Offerings, Publicity, and Responsible for Maintenance of Records, with one sub-committee responsible for filming and documenting the various activities taking place at the centre, and another for public relations and filming⁶¹; Building and Roadwork Committee, responsible for maintenance, arranging companies to tender for the building work to be done, and for procuring the building materials, which are often hard to come by⁶²; Water, Sewerage, Electricity, Amplification of Sound Committee, which also takes care of the sound system at the festival days⁶³; Food Offering Voluntary Workers' Association⁶⁴; Security and Rules Committee, responsible for dealing with problems arising in the observance and implementation of the centre's rules and regulations⁶⁵; Health and Hygiene Committee, responsible for diagnosing illnesses and prescribing and dispensing medicines⁶⁶; Committee Responsible for Cleaning the *Na-ya-ka' kyaung*⁶⁷; Public Relations and Records Committee, responsible for recording various important events at the centre, such as the birthday of the Ma-ha-si, the yearly meeting of the Board, and so forth⁶⁸; Ma-ha-si's Preaching Cassette Distribution Committee, responsible for organising the copying

59 For example, the BTNA Board of Trustees had only one advisor for 1980-1 who was ex-minister of justice. *Hi'tei-thi* had five and the Women Yaw'gi Caring Association 3. Five was the maximum number of persons elected on the BTNA Board of Trustees (BTNA 1979a:6).

60 In the year 1980-81 twenty different titles were printed, totalling 41,015 books, of which sixteen books (eight Burmese and eight English) were reprints, totalling 38,000 copies, and four were new Burmese titles, totalling 2,015 copies. It also organised a three month trip for the Ma-ha-si to England and Southeast Asia on 25 May 1980, when he was accompanied by three monks and one *kat-pi-ya'*. A number of other Ma-ha-si monks made more lengthy trips abroad.

61 The first group collected for the 1980-1 year for constructing and renovating buildings and wells, organising festivals, and other purposes, just over four million kyats (over 300,000 pounds according to the bank rate of exchange), most of which was donated for specific purposes. (BTNA 1981:74-5). The first sub-committee had three, and the second had five members.

62 The Buildings Committee had seven members (BTNA 1981:77-81).

63 The Water...Committee consisted of seven members (BTNA 1981:82-9).

64 Consisted of five members (all women) drawn from the Womens' Yaw'gi Caring Association (see no 2 above). In addition it has 11 assistant secretaries, 100 members, and another 200 voluntary workers at its disposal (BTNA 1981:90-2).

65 The Security...Committee consisted of four members (BTNA 1981:93-5).

66 The Health...Committee consisted of no less than six doctors and several nurses who regularly visited the centre clinic (BTNA 1981:96-9).

67 There was a division in small groups, one for each *na-ya-ka'* building who cleaned these (BTNA 1981:100-2).

68 Consisted of five members, and, with the aid of 35 mm film and video equipment documented some of the preaching of the Ma-ha-si and the *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daws* (BTNA 1981:75-6,103-6).

and selling of preaching sessions by the Ma-ha-si⁶⁹; and Ma-ha-si District Travelling Lecturers' Association, responsible for spreading the *tha-tha-na*.⁷⁰

Evidently, then, the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha is a highly organised and complex public facility which contrasts markedly with the informal leisurely structure of an ordinary monastery such as the one I stayed at in Mandalay, where there was no administrative officer or committee involved in the decision-making procedure.

The Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha comprises nearly eighty different buildings (BTNA 1981:100) and occupies approximately twenty acres of land (BTNA 1981:35)—it is therefore almost the size of a village. The buildings include: a 'library' (*pi'ta-ka daik*), an office block, a residence for the Ma-ha-si, six residences for the individual head teachers (*na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw*), five buildings for teaching monks, three dining halls, two assembly halls (*da-ma-yon*), one ordination hall (*thein*), at least four blocks of residences for monks, one block for foreign male meditators, and numerous smaller buildings accommodating monks, unordained male, unordained female, and nun *yaw"gi*. The scarcity of space means that new buildings have had to be built up higher; in particular, the Ma-ha-si decided to have high buildings after visiting America (BTNA 1981:7,8). Though not quite skyscrapers, in 1982 a new four-floor building offering accommodation to some hundred monks was completed.

During the year 1980-1 well over 5,000 *yaw"gi* were recorded to have entered for the purpose of meditation (BTNA 1981:308), of whom 55% were female lay *yaw"gi*, 28% as monks, 13% as male lay *yaw"gi*, and 4% nuns (BTNA 1981:27-8). By far the majority were female *yaw"gi*, though many men prefer to enter as monks rather than as lay *yaw"gi*. *Yaw"gi* generally spend between one and three months in continuous meditation, especially if it is their first time. But experienced *yaw"gi*, or 'old *yaw"gi*' (*yaw"gi a-haun*) as they were known, may just spend a few days or even a few hours meditating. The centre accommodates on average some 4-500 *yaw"gi* at any one time, but there are seasonal variations, with the rainy season (*wa*), sabbath, festival days, and school holidays being particularly crowded times. Most *yaw"gi* receive two cooked meals a day. *Yaw"gi* come from all over the country to meditate at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha.

69 (BTNA 1981:107-9).

70 The Ma-ha-si Committee was set up in 1970 and, having 53 Sangha members, travelled to preach all over Burma (BTNA 1981:supplement 1-16).

Yaw"gi are not asked to pay for the accommodation or teaching they receive. Furthermore, Hi'tei-thi aims, by donations from 'old *yaw*"gi', to offer free food to serious first-time meditators and foreigners, irrespective of their means. The centre is financed partly from donations flowing in during the year from 'old *yaw*"gi' for specific projects (like donations for a meal, a festival, a building, etc.), and partly from the interest on several 'money trees' (*pa-dei-tha' bin*)⁷¹ planted in the National Savings Bank (*naing-ngan-daw si"bwa"yei" ngwei-su'ban*). In this way, both the BTNA and Hi'tei-thi have their 'money trees'.⁷² Some *yaw*"gi who are unable to find sponsors to pay for their food are required to pay about four kyats a meal, but as offerings were frequently made to all residents in the centre, even those who pay for their meals often receive free meals. Sponsorship receives formal recognition and has status attached to it. At the entrance to the centre, the names and addresses of the major sponsors, together with the amounts sponsored, are displayed on placards. Their names are also published annually in the meditation centre yearbook. The sponsors of each meal offered to the *yaw*"gi are publicised on the day of the offering on a placard in the dining hall.⁷³

Only some clerical staff in the office and manual labourers get paid for the work they perform. All other work, whether it be cooking for the *yaw*"gi and the teachers, the looking after the monks, or supervising administration, constitutes an 'offering' and is seen as 'looking after in major and minor matters' (*wei-ya-wut-sa'*) for which the reward is religious merit (*wei-ya-wut-sa' ku'tho*). Even doctors give their services and medicines free to monks and meditators.

The daily routine

In the Mandalay monastery where I stayed there was very little regimented sense of routine. The two resident novices had to learn by rote passages indicated by the single resident monk, and they carried out the routine household tasks such as sweeping the floors, cleaning, preparing offerings at the Buddha statue, and so forth. The monk would every once in a while preach to people in the neighbourhood. He would also pump up ground water into a tank and would

71 See end-notes, *ngwei ba-dei-tha bin*.

72 The Government was concerned about the amounts of money spent on religious donations, and although putting the money in a Government Bank may not yield the best interest, it is diplomatically the best place. The BTNA administered four 'money trees' in 1980-81: 1. 'One kyat money tree', 2. 'Separate money tree', 3. 'Friendly money tree', 4. 'Sir U' Thwin' and Lady Thwin' money tree', with a total capital of just under two million kyats (approx. 150,000 pounds), with a yearly interest of 80,000 kyats (over 6,000 pounds) (BTNA 1981:28-9,128-31).

73 Ma-ha-si (BTNA 1981:27-8), in trying to encourage more financial support for *yaw*"gi, said about 'charity' (*da-na*): 'In the *Thu'ma-na' Thok-daw*, Princess *Thu'ma-na'* asked the Buddha, "Lord, in this *tha-tha-na-daw* of two disciples, although of equal complacency in the *ta-ya*", moral virtue and wisdom, one has an interest in charity, while the other does not. Of these two, after death when they get to the nat heavens, what happens to whom?" The Buddha preached to dear daughter *Thu'ma-na'* that he who offered overshadows he who did not in five ways. These five ways are: 1. Long life, 2. Beauty, 3. Contentment in body and spirit, 4. Many guardians, 5. Conspicuous famous powers; it is suitable to encourage the support of *yaw*"gi till they achieve *nyan-zin*, which is a noble charity.'

speak to visitors to the monastery. There was no regular alms round, and a neighbourhood rota existed to meet the monastery's daily food requirements, with cooked food being brought to the monastery sufficient to meet two meals. But there were no definite schedules of times set out, and life just went its course.

The daily routine in the meditation centre, on the other hand, was regimented to the extreme. It revolved almost exclusively around teaching and learning meditation, and this activity was supervised in minute detail. The bulk of teaching was done by six *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw* resident in the centre, of whom three were in specific charge of the men and monks, the women and nuns, and the foreigners. The *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw* had assistant teachers who preached and did routine teaching.

The daily routine for the *yaw"gi* was according to the following roster:

Walking exercise	3-4.00
Sitting exercise	4-5.00
Breakfast	6-7.00
Lunch and bathing	9-12.00
Sitting exercise	12-13.00
Walking exercise	13-14.00
Reporting	14-16.00
Sitting exercise	16-17.00
Walking exercise	17-18.00
Sitting exercise	18-19.00
Walking exercise	19-20.00
Sitting exercise	20-21.00
Walking exercise	21-22.00
Sitting exercise (in bed)	22-23.00
Sleeping	23-3.00

Sitting exercises were done by noting the belly rising and falling with breathing, with legs crossed and eyes closed. When the mind wanders off, the body is uncomfortable, and sounds distract; these must be noted, to return back again to the belly's movement up and down. Walking meditation alternated with sitting exercises provided a limited amount of physical exercise. Here one had to note not the belly moving up and down, but the foot moving up, striding forward, and coming down. It had to do with breaking up what was normally experienced as single events, into ever smaller multiple sub-events. Thereby one becomes aware of impermanence experientially as opposed to understanding it intellectually.

Yaw"gi reported daily between 2 and 4 pm to their *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw*, who assessed whether progress was being made according to the stages in the *nyan-zin* (Path of Knowledge). Only upon completion of this path at the end of the meditation period was the *yaw"gi* eventually received by the Ma-ha-si and given final confidential instructions, being encouraged to continue meditation until penetration (*a-ri'ya*) is attained. At the time I visited the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw did not do much teaching any longer except to large congregations.

Meditation had to be practised at all times except for the sleeping period, which meant that as much as twenty hours a day was devoted to meditation. Meditation should become an activity that permeates all daily activities, such as bathing, eating, and going to the toilet. All sitting and walking exercises were done in sexually segregated halls and walkways. The rules of the centre were strict⁷⁴, specifying that: all *yaw"gi* should observe the rules of morality; that they were not allowed to talk, correspond or write, or make phone calls; and that in all matters they should consult their meditation teacher. *Yaw"gi* were not allowed to leave the centre without prior permission from their head teacher (*na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daw*). As the *yaw"gi* were meant to enter for a period of austere retreat and should not have their senses disturbed, there was very little in terms of activities for *yaw"gi* in the centre other than meditating, eating, bathing, reporting, sleeping, and personal hygiene.

Accommodation and seating arrangements were such that as far as possible monks were separated from lay *yaw"gi*, and male lay *yaw"gi* from the lay women and the nuns. This was evident in the way the buildings were laid out, with the womens' residence located southwest, the male *yaw"gi* residences southeast, and the monk residences southeast and north. It was also evident at times of communal assembly, in that women would congregate separately from men. At the twice daily meal-times this segregation took on an almost ritual character. Before meal-times neat separate rows of monks formed in order of seniority in the robes, the group of novices, the group of male *yaw"gi*, and the group of female *yaw"gi* with nuns. The monks would stand quietly in line in order of seniority of ordination in the middle of the road nearest to the entrance of the dining hall, while the male *yaw"gi* would stand or squat alongside the road, and the female *yaw"gi* gathered in an area out of sight, furthest from the dining hall. At the sound of the gong, the monks used to enter the dining hall in order of seniority, then the novices, followed by the male *yaw"gi*, the nuns, and finally the female *yaw"gi*.

Upon entry into the hall the monks seated themselves nearest to the Buddha shrine, followed by the novices, the male *yaw"gi*, the nuns, and finally the female *yaw"gi*. All sat on the floor around circular tables. The first thing after entry into the dining hall was for all to pay respect to the Buddha by prostrating three times in the usual fashion. In effect, if the monks paid respect to the Buddha, the novices paid their respects to the monks and the Buddha. The male and female lay *yaw"gi* and the nuns paid their respects to the novices, the monks and the Buddha.

The order of partaking of the meals followed the above pattern. First of all, before anyone entered the building, the cook, or the trustee, would offer the Buddha little plates of curry and rice, and recite a prayer. The recitation at offering to the Buddha was standard to Burmese

74 For the *Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha* rules see appendix E.

religious life, and was not particular to the meditation movement. Householders offered food to the Buddha before they partook of the meal, and this was also done at monasteries. The prayer will run something like this:

'To the Lord of Life, the noble omniscient Buddha, who is replete with the Nine Qualities starting with Enlightenment (*a-ra'han*) and who is worshipped by human and spirit alike, to the Four Shrines⁷⁵—the *da-tu' ze-di*, the *da-ma' ze-di*, the *ok-deik-tha' ze-di*, and the *pa-ri'baw"ga' ze-di*, I offer the taste of this food, which is full of appearance, smell and taste. May I achieve the knowledge of the Path (*meg-nyan*) and reap the fruits of *neik-ban*.'

The monastic code of conduct (*wi'ni*) prevents monks from partaking of the food upon entry. A layman must either 'hand' (*kat thi*) each dish individually, or the whole of the table to at least one monk in each circle before the monks can commence. Special care was taken in the preparation of food for the monks, who received several curries more than all the other *yaw"gi*. Then the male *yaw"gi* would eat, followed by nuns and female *yaw"gi*. During the meal the names and addresses of the donors would be announced, and the *yaw"gi* were expected to 'ask for a boon' (*hsu' taung" thi*) in their heart, so that the donor would obtain extra merit. Also the donors, and their families, observed with respect and apparent joy the intake of food by the monks and *yaw"gi*. After all the *yaw"gi* had finished their meals, non-meditating guests—usually the donors of the meal and their guests—would eat. Finally, the left overs were fed to birds and stray dogs. The donors then would go to the residence of one of the *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daws* where they would perform the water libation ceremony to register their act of merit.

A special leaflet distributed to the new *yaw"gi* included regulations pertaining to food intake. The first rule indicated the importance of seating order, and revealed the separation between monk and layman: 'In accordance with the duties of partaking of alms, *yaw"gi* may not sit at monk's places.' They should choose a place which is according to their merits. Other rules indicate 'to note every taking, eating and chewing', 'not to make any noises eating or talking', 'cleanliness', and 'to cover the mouth and divert the face when coughing'.

The calendar

Once a full course of meditation had been completed, 'old *yaw"gi*' were likely to come back for various events. For example, there was a regular weekly preaching at the centre by one of the senior monks on Saturday evenings. Many of the non-meditating *yaw"gi* would also spend their duty day (*u"bok-nei'*) meditating at the centre. Old *yaw"gi* would on these occasions go around to pay their respects and make offerings to their teachers and also meet their friends.

75 These shrines were built around respectively: the relics from Buddha's body (teeth, hair, etc), of the scriptures, of the Buddha's utensils (bowl, etc), and of representations of the Buddha (pictures, drawings, etc.).

But the biggest events were yearly one-off events such as: the festival given in honour of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw's birthday, the instructions (*aw"wa-da'*) by the Ma-ha-si to the monks and the *yaw"gi*, the offering of robes to the monastic order (*ka-htein*), and the offering of robes to the monastic order at the beginning of rainy season (*wa-zo thin-gan*").

The birthday of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw fell on the third day of full moon in the month of Wa-zo (aged 76 on 30/7/1980). At breakfast time the Ma-ha-si and his pupils did their devotions at the Assembly Hall, and offered an offering tray (*hsun"daw-gyi" bwe"*) in honour (*a-yon pyu'thi*) of the Buddha. Then the *than-ga* and the *yaw"gi* and guests were offered breakfast (BTNA 1981:38-9). Offerings poured into the centre from all over the country and were exhibited in the assembly hall. The birthdays of the *na-ya-ka' hsa-ya-daws* were celebrated on a somewhat less grand scale.

Although offering of robes occurred throughout the year, there were times when offering was considered especially appropriate. One such time was just before the rainy season at the end of July, when the 'rainy season robes' (*wa-zo thin-gan*") were offered. In 1980, this fell on 28 July, just before the Ma-ha-si's birthday. Another was the time at the end of rainy season in October (*ka-htein*), which fell on the 26th in 1980. The explanation for this was that when rainy season was finished while the Buddha resided in Zei-da-wun monastery in Tha-wa-di-pye, the monks who came to worship the Buddha had been caught out by the rain and wind, and were covered with mud. When the Buddha saw them, he informed them that monks coming out of the rainy season may be offered robes. From then on Buddhists offered robes during the first month after the rainy season. Benefits accruing to the laymen donating the *ka-htein* robes were said to be: becoming free, making heavy responsibilities feel light, assuring plenty of food, no danger of loss of property, and protection from theft. No less than 108 robes were offered of each, of the *wa-zo* and the *ka-htein* robes in 1980 (BTNA 1981:40).⁷⁶

The Ma-ha-si instruction week (*aw"wa-da'*) was the biggest event of the year. This was held every year, ever since 1950, the year after the Ma-ha-si joined the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, and so 1980 was the thirty-first instruction week. Between 17-21 December, 440 monks, about 4,000 *yaw"gi* and well over 10,000 guests came from 150 different centres all over Burma from 108 townships. Fifteen committees totalling about 300 people were set up specifically to organise

76 About the robe offering ceremony:

'It (the priest's cloth) cannot be received except by a chapter, which must be constituted of at least five priests; when the cloth is offered, the priests hold a consultation and inquire, Which of us stands in need of a robe? The priest who is most in need of a garment, ought now to make known to his want, but this rule is not followed, as the priest who has read the sacred books, or expounded them during the performance of mass, whether the most destitute or not, usually received the robe. The priest respectfully asks the rest of the chapter to partake of the merits produced by the offering. the assembled priests, assisted by the lay devotees, make the cloth into a robe, and dye it yellow, the whole of which process must be concluded in 60 hrs. or a natural day' (EM quoted in Judson 1953:1066, note 24).'

catering and accommodation for these visitors. The event I attended in 1981 was so thronged with thousands of people that it was virtually impossible to move about, and the atmosphere was quite unlike anything I had ever seen at a meditation centre before. During these days the monks preached, and the Ma-ha-si informed both monks (the first day) and *yaw"gi* (the second day) in separate meetings on the direction he thought teaching should take, and the mistakes that were being made. Films were shown on Ma-ha-si's work abroad, and book stands with publications were on show. All visitors and *yaw"gi* were fed at no cost, which was called 'feeding those from the four cardinal directions' (*sa-du' deik-tha kywei" thi*) (BTNA 1981:47-57). There were many visitors from the ethnic minorities who did not speak any Burmese (BTNA 1981:35).

Other more regular festive occasions related to the inauguration of new buildings, and novitiation and monk ordination ceremonies. These occasions were often accompanied by free food for all *yaw"gi* and the monks in the centre.

The Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha also maintained close links with monasteries and meditation centres elsewhere. A rota existed for the teachers and assistants to travel and preach by invitation around the country with the purpose of encouraging people to meditate. 'Old *yaw"gi*' played a vital role in spreading this network, as they liked to invite monks to come and preach in their home towns. Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha monks were also in demand to attend the many opening ceremonies of new centres throughout the country.

Special classes for children, taught by monks, were introduced in 1969, and by 1981 there were ten different standards. Initially these were meant to prepare boys for novicehood, teaching them the novicehood rules and appropriate behaviour, but in 1975 classes were also introduced for girls, taught by nuns. Special textbooks had been written to accompany teaching. Children were also taught how to meditate. In 1981, 385 children took exams at the Centre (BTNA 1981:42-3).

Conclusion

We have observed that the organisational structure and purpose of the meditation centre is altogether different from that of the conventional monastery: one is designed for large-scale temporary meditation, the other for long-term residence and scriptural learning by monks; one has a large committee structure monopolised by the laity, the other merely one or two 'helpers' with all decision-making in the hands of the senior monks. Yet there are also many ways in which the meditation centre resembles the monastery. The openness of the meditation centre to entry by all from whatever background (provided they abide by the rules), and the open hospitality (as in feeding everyone from the four corners of the earth) were common to both. We have also seen that under certain circumstances, and by certain unordained *yaw"gi*, the meditation centre is regarded as a 'monastery' and the *yaw"gi* as monks, whether it is inhabited by ordained monks, as in the case of the TY, or not, as in the case of the Ma-ha Baw"di' or the Ba' Hkin meditation

centres. Yet this interpretation, when examined in the wider context of Burmese Buddhism, is controversial, as is the use of monastic language.

This chapter raises two further points.

First, from the perspective of the fieldworker there is an important difference between the monastery and the meditation centre. This is that, while the monastery admits many entries to many different types of knowledge, all authentic, the meditation centre allows only one entry to one authentic type of knowledge. While in the monastery knowledge can be received in a social context and transmitted between people, in the meditation centre knowledge is not conceived in its 'received' form but only as an experiential knowledge derived from lengthy private dedicated 'work'. This has significant implications for the fieldworker. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* Malinowski (1921:8) wrote that 'with the capacity of enjoying their company and sharing some of the games and amusements I began to feel that I was indeed in touch with the natives'. But meditating 'natives' do not have the time or the inclination to sit around socialising and amusing the anthropologist. In the meditation centre 'going native' and the sharing of sympathy and friendliness does not get one very far. Social pleasantries were a distraction to meditation and, except for special moments set apart such as an open day, or the birthday of a teacher, there were few occasions for small-talk. There were no games, there were no amusements, there were no words, there is only the experience, only the serious practice of meditation for each deeply withdrawn in him/herself. So, while I could change my trousers for a *lon-gyi*, switch from the English language to Burmese, learn to pay my respect to monks, and, indeed, become a member of the monastic order (however briefly), I could never 'fake' WM practice without accepting the deepest of personal commitments it involves. Neither my personal experience in early life, nor my anthropological training, both based on the skills of social compromise and language exchange, had quite equipped me to approach such intrinsically anti-social activity. This, to me, was perhaps the most crucial difference between fieldwork in a meditation centre and in a monastery.

Second, though monks may have diminished power in the context of decision-making in the meditation centre as compared to the monastery, this should not be taken to the logical conclusion that they have lost their clout—it is simply different from what it was before. It would be tempting to conclude from the history of the TY that it is government power, not monk power, that provided the Ma-ha-si method with its popularity. Yet this is untrue. Government support may have been important in the initial stages of expanding the popularity of the Ma-ha-si's meditation method, but before the Ma-ha-si was invited by the BTNA he had already achieved a nexus of no less than three meditation centres spread between the extreme east and west of Burma. Furthermore, it cannot have been only government support that was responsible for its

popularity for another reason: during the early years of the 1962 military coup, the average number of new centres opened per annum may have showed a discrete drop from a high of 8.4 in the 1950s to 5.5 after the military coup in the 1960s, but in the 1970s it increased again to 12.8, the highest number ever, despite no overt government support.⁷⁷ During my stay in Burma between 1981-2 its growth was unabated: I attended the opening ceremony of two new Ma-ha-si centres, one in Mandalay and one in Rangoon, and preparations for opening a third centre near Yei-paw-gan Ywa, a village near Thon-gwa Myo', and there were others opening too. Furthermore, neither the Sun"lun", the Mo"gok, or the Mo"hnyin" Hsa-ya-daw, all three of whom managed to develop their own empires of meditation centres, albeit somewhat smaller, did so with any government support at all. Renowned monks were indispensable to a religious organisation, as monks always manage to generate support by virtue of their office and their network of fellow monks, who, once proficient in the meditation method, tend to set up their own centres in their home towns and villages. Monks also generate a great deal more respect from the laity than can laymen. This explains why today the methods propagated by monks are far more popular than the few methods propagated by laymen, which have a very small, selective and localised appeal.

One might argue that the nationalisation of industry and private property has a lot to do with the revival of meditation. Any money made on the black market has to be translated into something. Yet monasteries today are not significantly better off than before the coup, while the meditation centres have continued to make inroads into Burmese Buddhism since. If it were a question of economics, surely offering any illegal profits 'privately' to the monastery would be a much more attractive proposition than offering it to the lay committees populating the meditation centres, where no privileged access can be guaranteed?

This 'monastic' underpinning of the meditation centre explains also why a significant feature of WM popularity is that none of the methods developed and taught by laymen—and here I am thinking in particular of Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" and his pupils Ba' Hkin from the IMC and Hsa-ya Thein" from the Ma-ha Baw"di' Centre—have achieved anything like the success in Burma as compared to the methods disseminated by monks. If we were to measure success in terms of the number of off-shoot centres and the number of *yaw"gi*, there is no doubt that WM methods propagated by monk teachers have been a much greater success than any of the lay-oriented centres: they have tens of thousands of faithful *yaw"gi*, and provide guidance to hundreds of affiliated centres, while the lay centres such as the Ma-ha Baw"di' centre, have only a fraction of *yaw"gi* and a handful of loosely affiliated sister centres over which they have no authority.

77 See end-notes, 'Ma-ha-si Meditation Centre Openings'.

But despite the overall success of the Ma-ha-si's monastically evolved meditation method and the monastic underpinnings of the meditation centre; the characteristic of presentday meditation centres remains their predominant orientation to the lives of the unordained. It is in this respect that the meditation centre is different from the traditionally rare monasteries specializing in meditation (*wi'pat-tha-na du-ra' kyaung*) over scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti' du-ra' kyaung*). Even in the most monk-oriented of meditation centres, the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, only one in four *yaw"gi* were monks. But the discourse of these unordained tends towards the monastic by virtue of accomplishment in practice. The evidence above, at least, suggests that Burmese Buddhism today is not increasingly 'laicised', but rather that the laity is increasingly 'monasticised', and increasingly conceive of themselves as and adopt the language of the *than-ga*.

6

On the tension between *tha-ma-hta'* and *wi'pat-tha-na*

Case studies of three meditators

- (i) The WM *yaw"gi* emphasises one specific type of meditative action as the ideal, namely 'insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na*), as opposed to 'concentration' (*tha-ma-hta'*) meditation. Only the former is unique to Buddhism, but the latter is not.

Some speak of 'concentration' meditation (P *samatha*) believing it to be 'insight' meditation (P. *vipassanā*). Some are of the opinion that true 'insight' is really 'concentration', and some are also saying that neither is efficacious.... (Ma-ha-si 1981a:2)

This chapter has two parts. In the first part, case studies of three contemporary meditators are presented. How did their interest in meditation begin? What were their experiences? How did they distinguish between different types of Buddhist practice?¹ The second part of this chapter attempts to make sense of the contrasting notions held by different Burmese practitioners of meditation, namely about *tha-ma-di'* (*samādhi*) and *wi'pat-tha-na* (*vipassanā*).

1 KN criticised this chapter for not including 'real' WM *yaw"gi* who aimed for 'true' WM as an unordained person. Yet he agreed with me that it is very difficult to get serious and devout WM *yaw"gi* to talk about their experiences in WM; by and large they prefer to leave me to find my answers in meditation for myself. The case studies included in this chapter are what one might refer to as 'improvising' meditators, who seek to understand everything to do with meditation on their own terms and who have difficulties accepting the authority of any one teacher; they were the ones most forthcoming in talking of their experiences. It should be noted that chapter 7 presents the profiles of two authentic meditation teachers.

(U") Lei", a pensioner-merchant

I addressed him as (U") Lei", meaning 'Little Uncle'. (U") Lei" devoted his life to various types of meditation after he retired from his work, a lucrative trade in clothing (mainly *lon-gyi*) at one of the bigger Rangoon markets where he had climbed from 'market elder' to 'secretary', to finally become 'head', which he remained until his retirement in 1978. As (U") Lei" was only at home for short periods of time, the material below was gathered from about seven in-depth interviews.

Of his six children the youngest son was still a student at Rangoon university, a twin son and daughter had after their studies taken over the family store at the market, one daughter worked at the University, one, together with her husband, traded in clothing at another market, and the eldest was a housewife. All lived in the parental home except the eldest who lived with her husband, who was a doctor. (U") Lei"'s parents were of Chinese background, as was one of his wife's parents—yet all in this family considered themselves *ba-ma*, and none could write, speak or understand Chinese.

(U") Lei" was born in Bassein in 1923. He attended school up to the fourth form, and at the age of 15 he became a novice in the local monastery for two years. At the age of 17 he started buying and selling rice. When he was twenty years old, in 1943, he joined the Burma Independence Army, then known as the Burma Defence Army (BDA). He fought the Japanese during the last six months of the war and was an instructor of 'war knowledge' to the BDA members for a while.

After the war at the age of twenty-three he started a business together with an army friend who had obtained a heavy vehicle licence. (U") Lei" arranged the business contacts, and his friend drove. They peddled gram (*ka-la" be"*) and jaggery between Mandalay and Rangoon. They also peddled other goods, and after a year or so he met his wife in Pegu, a town on the way between Mandalay and Rangoon, when she ordered him to bring a few Burmese petticoats (*hta-mein*) from Rangoon. He married her soon after, and ran a shop in Pegu for about six years.

(U") Lei" had his first meditation experiences after the family moved to Rangoon in 1953 where they opened their shop in a market:

I was about thirty years old. I had never observed duty day (*u"bok-nei*) out of my own initiative, but now I started going to the Kyaikassan Pagoda regularly to take the moral precepts and pay worship. One day I met a nun there, who introduced me to the meditation methods of the monk Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw. I subsequently sat three standard seven day periods of meditation, and continued to meditate mornings, evenings and Sundays.

(U") Lei" expressed this as a change in his life from a concern with 'the matter of thriving' (a modern term for 'economics'), to a concern with 'the matters of the religious realm and *wi'pat-tha-na'* (*tha-tha-na yei" ne' wi'pat-tha-na*). His meditation affected his attitude to business, which in turn led to problems with his wife:

My wife did not like the way I acted in the market. If something would normally be sold at 35 Ky, we always used to start off with 45 Ky as the asking price. Now I was asking for 35 Ky straight

away. The *wi'pat-tha-na* experience gave me the wisdom to see that all this haggling was 'impermanent', and that it had no meaning to ask for high prices. But my wife only once did a little meditation at the Sun²lun² to see, but decided she did not like it. She is a 'charity' (*da-na*) person, and I am a 'meditation' (*ba-wa-na*) person.

(U²) Lei²'s meditation had evidently not only changed him, but had also fundamentally altered his relationship with his wife.

In 1958 (U²) Lei² was forced to travel more frequently to obtain supplies for the market stall. They had changed their merchandise, and by now specialised in silk goods. (U²) Lei² went as far as the Shan States to obtain these:

During this period I had little opportunity for quiet meditation. But in 1962 the new military government classified silk goods as black market, which made our trade illegal. I continued trade, and got caught in 1968 when I bought a consignment of *lon-gyi* from a group of farmers. My goods were confiscated and I served a jail sentence of three and a half months. From the little money my wife saved over the years we set up a trade in slippers, pots, and blankets at the same stall. Only in 1971 it became possible again to resume trading in clothing.

(U²) Lei²'s experiences with the law had a profound effect on him, and brought him back to meditation:

While I had little opportunity to meditate during the period after 1958, I started meditating again in 1969 on my first birthday after release from prison. But my emphasis had changed. No longer did I want to practise solely *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation, but I started to practise mainly concentration (*tha-ma-ha*) meditation. I meditated mainly with the 'rosaries'. After one year I achieved the ability to 'hear and see' (*a-kyā a-myin*). I visited regularly Min-bu², where I met up with sages (*weik-za*) such as (U²) Ok-ta-ma-gyaw and (U²) Pan-di'ta².

In 1970, after having been in contact with the sages (*weik-za*) for a year or so, (U²) Lei² started to collect money for funding the repair of a pagoda. (U²) Lei² became associated with this pagoda through a friend, also a salesman in silk goods at the market, who was donor of a monastery near the pagoda. As the abbot of this monastery was seeking sponsors for repair of the pagoda, he contacted (U²) Lei². (U²) Lei², through his special diagnostic powers, detected diseases caused

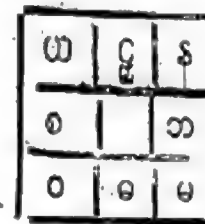
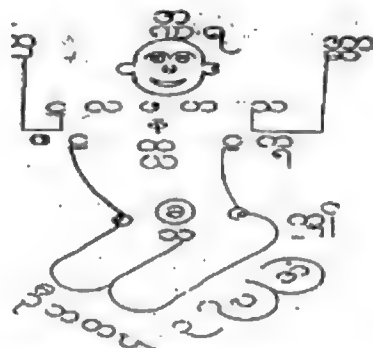


Figure 3. 'Magic squares' (in²) as used by practitioners such as U² Lei². These are often written on paper and ingested to derive powers. Left: represents the *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*, as made up from Burmese lettering. Right: a more conventional magic square, intended to be used to relieve constipation. Both were taken from Kyaw Yin (1968:97, 78). U² Lei² used such magical squares in his repertoire of remedies with which he treated ill people, and with the revenue of which he renovated the pagoda.

2 Min²bu² is well-known centre for the practice of various types of occult concentration (*tha-ma-ha*) meditation.

by supernatural beings such as spirits (*nat*), treasure guardians (*ok-da-zaung*) and witches (*son"ma*). He got together no less than one million kyats by diagnosing possession and other causes of disease associated with malignant spirits. He did this in the pagoda compound, and leaflets of his practice were distributed on trains. He never charged fees for himself, but people would make offerings to the pagoda, which generated funds for its repair. During this period he slept only six hours a day, and when not working in the market he meditated. One day I went with him to visit the pagoda he had helped to repair and a monastery nearby, and he was proud to be very well received by the monks. Even people in the neighbourhood still remembered him, though it was more than ten years ago since the repair. (U") Lei" said he was related in a former life to the abbot of this monastery as uncle and nephew. The abbot had been the son of Tha-hton Ma-nu-ha Min", while he himself was the younger brother of the king at the time.³ It was his concentration (*tha-ma-ha*) practice that made his medicine efficacious (*hsei" laik thi*).

A year after the repair of the pagoda (U") Lei" was ordained in Min-bu for three years:

I became a monk⁴ after going to the 'opening of the oven festival' in Min-bu. (U") Pan-di'ta' had 'gone into the oven' (*hpo win thi*) to renew his sagehood, and would be coming out then. U Pan-di'ta' had to renew his sagehood at the age of 721 years old, and had remained in the oven for five months of meditation. Yet the heat of the oven had not affected him because he had good concentration (*tha-ma-di*). When I told my wife that I wanted to go, she said 'they will be able to open the oven by themselves, why do you want to go?'. She was not in favour at all. But I insisted that if I ate the ashes of this oven, I would have a long life, and my wife eventually gave in and let me go there. The opening of the oven turned out to be a 'victory festival' (*aung bwe*) as Pan-di'ta' had been successful, and was alive after the experience. The oven had only been fired at the beginning of the five month period. It was opened at ten o'clock at night at the end of this period, and I saw many hundreds of people running to the oven when I was there. They were allowed to peep through a hole the size of a head, and as U Pan-di'ta' shouted 'victory', so did I, at the same time putting my fist up. We all threw popped rice into the oven. Later a pagoda would have its umbrella hoisted, and five men were chosen—from about a thousand willing—to become monk. I

Figure 4. A depiction of the way the ordeal of fire can lead to achievement of supernatural power as taken from *Ka-wi Tha-ni* (1954:14). U" Lei" witnessed the U" Pan-di'ta' 'coming out of the oven' after his ordeal by fire, by which he extended his life for a further period.



3 Tha-hton Ma-nu-ha Min" was the Mon king defeated by A-naw-ra'hta in 1057, when Buddhism was introduced to Pagan.

4 (U") Lei"'s reason for becoming a monk was that he had no rest to practise his meditation properly at home, and meditation was all he wanted to do. A *weik-za* told him that not only was the body 'suffering' (*dak-hka*), but the mind was 'suffering' too. He experienced fear at the thought that everyone has to die. He said, 'I see a father and son, and one day in the past the father was as young as the son, but he is old now, and his son will be as old as his father one day too. Beautiful girls with make-up and perfume are pressed close to me in the bus, but I now realize that they too will be old women one day. And yet they do not realize this.'

was lucky to have been chosen, and that is how I became a monk at this monastery in Min-bu for three years.

Ever since then (U") Lei" was in and out of monasteries—repeatedly undergoing ordination and disrobing for his return home to Rangoon. At home he occupied the first floor of the house with the big Buddha-shelf, while his wife lived downstairs. His wife was completely against his behaviour, and refused to give him any money. So he relied on his children to provide for him. Once I overheard a remark his wife made to her daughter: 'Don't give your father any food, do you hear!'. His wife admitted disliking his renunciation from family and business and found his presence inauspicious to the house. She complained about the high cost of his regular expenditure on offerings to spirits and saints (*bo"daw*). To her, the only deity of any importance was Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw⁵, but really only the monks mattered. She gave 'charity' to the novices every morning, and even the chocolate I brought from England, which I knew she liked, she gave to the monks.

When at home, (U") Lei" used to sit every day from 5 o'clock in the morning until late at night meditating and chanting in front of the Buddha shrine. I could hear him as I was going down the stairs in the mornings chanting 'Sanskrit' chants⁶: *a-ra-han dei-ti ram ti-da ram ram...* He had a piece of cloth near by him where visiting spirits could sit. He explained to me the importance of 'loving-kindness meditation' (*myit-ta ka-ma-htan*) to successful concentration meditation. I could hear him while coming down the stairs uttering:

'may all beings in the 31 plains of existence, human, spirits, holy men (*bo"daw*), *bya'ma*, and so forth be well'

(U") Lei"'s battle: concentration or WM?

We have noted how (U") Lei" saw his life as moving from WM to practising concentration meditation which gave him powers with which he could perform charity at the pagoda. By these means, in turn, he had become client to sages living long lives in Min"bu" and on the basis of his good *kan* it was his good fortune to be chosen to become a monk there. This is the early history of (U") Lei". I arrived in Burma on 10 July 1981, and by 25 July I was deeply involved in an episode of which I only appreciated the importance later. (U") Lei", after making a second attempt at WM, this time not at the Sun"lun" but at the Ma-ha-si Yeik-tha, ran away from his WM practice.

The background is as follows. On 18 July I went with (U") Lei" for a visit to the Sun"lun" Centre where he had practised WM many years before. On the way back we passed a group of people whom (U") Lei" referred to as 'family', but they did not appear to be related at all: they were all deeply involved in concentration meditation (*tha-ma-hta*). Their house was filled with statues

5 A Hindu goddess conceived by many Buddhists as the protector goddess of the Ti'pi'ta-ka'.

6 Sanskrit is often used by those who emphasise *tha-ma-hta*'.

of spirits and holy men (*bo"daw*). (U") Lei" said there and then that a certain Ku'wei-na',⁷ the top of all nats, had told him in person to do WM, not concentration (*tha-ma-hta'*). In accordance with this encouragement on 21 July, (U") Lei", like so many Burmese lay-people, made his way to the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha for a month's meditation and I thought nothing of it.

(U") Lei" did not stay long. On 23 July he ran away from the centre and arrived back home. He gave various reasons for leaving, but they were in all threefold. First, that the monks from the centre treated him very rudely. He alleged that they said to him: 'If you do not want to listen, you will be kicked out'. He argued that this was no language for a monk to use. He was a senior person, had been a monk too, and understood their ways very well. He had not given cause to be shouted at like this. (U") Lei"'s other two reasons had to do with the supernatural. Seven years before, he had prescribed some medicine for a neighbour, a woman, who had developed stomach trouble which (U") Lei" diagnosed as being caused by a spirit called A-nauk Me-daw. (U") Lei" incurred this spirit's wrath and subsequently she repeatedly came to disturb him time upon time since. It was her fault that he left the centre. Finally, (U") Lei"'s third reason, given to his daughters, was the monk's dismissive attitude to the admission by (U") Lei" that he had seen the meditation centre's treasure guardian (*ok-da-zaung*) who guarded the centre.

(U") Lei" faced a problem at home. The day after he left the centre the two daughters who shared his home, both enthusiastic WM *yaw"gi*, expressed their unhappiness at his leaving. His wife was unhappy whatever he did, but his daughters looked after him, and their displeasure meant something. Some of (U") Lei"'s stories of his rebirths indicated how close he felt to his daughters.⁸ The two daughters conspired to pressurise their father to go back to the meditation centre. (U") Lei" adopted an obstinate stance. His daughters tried to further their cause by involving others. They called their younger brother, who had also meditated at the centre. And they called me from upstairs, asking me in front of their father what I thought should happen, whether he should go back or not.

On the one hand I empathised with (U") Lei". I had myself been deeply discouraged by the strictness of this very same monk just a few days prior to this episode, who, when I arrived, advocated three months full-time meditation for twenty hours a day without talking or writing, as the only way for me to find out about WM. I managed to make do with two weeks meditation at this centre, but with so many dedicated meditators devoting months of their lives to a single stretch of meditation I could not compete for the monks' attention. My meditation achievements

7 Ku'wei-na' is one of four generals commanded by Tha-gya" Min" (KN).

8 On one occasion he told me how he had been informed once by a nun that one of his daughters, the one who cared most for him, had been related in one life as daughter to him as a father, in two lives as sister to him as a brother, and in one life as a mother to him as a son.

in this period were unremarkable as my interest was not primarily in the subjective experience but in the ways meditation finds a place in the social and cultural life of the Burmese. Later on I found out how widely known the strictness of the monk in question was, as I learnt about other men who had left the centre because of him (the monk was of Shwei-gyin background).

On the other hand, my interpretation of (U") Lei's account suggested two things. First, he was short-tempered and sometimes plainly rude, and this must have played a role in precipitating the monk's comments. He had a tendency to be upset with his children while at home, and was frequently angry with my persistent questioning, so that I had to be circumspect and not ask too much at a time. Also, in the street he would sometimes prick his umbrellas into peoples' bellies, not the most polite of greetings in Burma. Once I was interviewing a concentration 'society leader' (*gaing" hsa-ya*) within hearing distance of (U") Lei", who scolded this man—unnecessarily rudely—for telling me about conventional Buddhism, i.e. about the importance of observing the precepts and so forth, rather than the more typical concentration practices, such as the idea of extending one's life as sages (*weik-za*) ultimately do. It was more than likely that (U") Lei" had been impolite to the teaching monk too. Second, (U") Lei" continued to practise his own meditation methods not taught at the centre. This was a rare combination of the Sun"lun" *a-na-pa-na'* method, with its emphasis on fast breathing through the nose and sensing suffering (*dok-hka'*), of spending a long time in practising loving-kindness, and of inducing a state of semi-possession by sages. None of these were taught and—with the exception of loving-kindness—none were tolerated in the centre. (U") Lei" certainly never practised the recommended observing rise-and-fall of the belly. Also, from (U") Lei"'s manner of sitting and speaking, the centre monks must have deduced that he was stereotypical of the confused meditator with all sorts of folkloric notions about meditation, but with little motivation to do WM. At this centre, perhaps more so than at any other centre in Burma, (U") Lei"'s syncretic practices stood out like a sore thumb. By not listening to the instructions of his teachers, and persisting with his own hodge-podge of beliefs he was violating the centre's rules.

Evidently, then, the event was the fault of both the monk in question and (U") Lei", two quite difficult people to get along with. Of course, the children had their own reasons for getting (U") Lei" to meditate at the centre. They held that (U") Lei" was being destabilised by his traumatic experiences in concentration meditation with the supernatural, and WM would make him less volatile, less moody, and more in control of himself while at home. When I was asked my opinion, I softly noted that for (U") Lei" to go back without resolving what he wanted to do—concentration or WM—would not make any sense. If, as he himself noted, spirits bothered him because he did the former, and practice of the latter would make these problems go away,

then I saw him benefitting from going back. But if he went back without being convinced that he wanted to do WM perhaps he should not go back.

(U") Lei" was furious with his children for thinking that they could possibly tell their father what to do. But he stood alone, and after much negotiation, he declared himself prepared to go back to meditate, though not at the same centre. The youngest brother was despatched to the centre to inform a monk, whom the daughters trusted to solve the problem. The next day we all went to the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, discussed the matter, and a place was arranged for (U") Lei" in a sister centre, Chan"myei' Yeik-tha, propagating the same method. His daughters were ecstatic with their father's decision to cooperate, and they visited him every day to offer him food and look after his needs while at the centre. He then stayed for about ten days.

It would, however, be wrong to think that (U") Lei" had thereby chosen WM. Not only did he still interact with a fair number of supernatural beings throughout the period at the sister centre,⁹ but his lack of dedication to WM was substantiated later, after his return home. After his meditation at this centre and after a period he spent away from home¹⁰, on 6 November 1981, (U") Lei" had a bad experience with some sages (*weik-za*) who came to visit him. On this day he was not quite in control of the situation:

After I had counted the rosaries and 'sent loving-kindness', an Indian sage appeared who told me that he was the most powerful sage in India, and that while he was with me no other sage would dare to come. He asked me to try out, and so I did. I sent loving kindness again, and after three rounds of the rosary, there appeared a Burmese sage. Burmese sages do not normally fight amongst each other, because they know and respect each others' strengths and weaknesses, but this Indian sage was not part of that. I landed myself in the middle of a test of strength between the two.

He was visibly upset and shaken by the experience when he spoke:

The Burmese sage then said to the Indian one, whose name was Thi-wa-li' Bo"daw, 'You are a useless Indian, what do you know!'. The Indian became very angry, and they argued.

The next day (7 Nov) I saw (U") Lei" again, and he told me he had not been able to sleep very well. But Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw (the deity his wife respected) whom he considered his personal protector, had come to visit him:

Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw told me to do WM instead of concentration meditation, and then all these problems of spirits would vanish. She said 'If you are prepared to do WM then I will reserve you a place in realm of the *bya'ma* heavens'. Another saintly sage (*a-ri'ya weik-za*) had offered his protection to me, but I rejected this as Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw is much more powerful, even more powerful than Tha-gya" Min", the King of the 37 spirits. I have decided to do WM from now on.

(U") Lei" explained his long association with this deity as follows:

9 Unfortunately I was ill during much of this period of U" Lei" 's meditation: I had damaged my leg by stepping through a piece of wood into a sewerage ditch, which left me with a number of internal infections and fever. From a brief visit I did learn that (U") Lei" had seen another *ak-da-zaung*, who wanted to sleep with him, and a foreign spirit, a woman. He claimed the regime of meditation was even stricter at the Chan"myei' Yeik-tha than at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha.

10 I went to Mandalay and Moulmein, and went in for my meditation sessions at the Ma-ha-si.

Figure 5. *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*, the protectress of the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'* as depicted in *Sein Hpei* (n.d.:81). U" Lei" claimed to have been a son of this deity in a past life, and she was his protectress in his last life.



It was in 1953, at the time I was still meditating WM at the Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw that a coconut offered to the *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw* burst open, and the coconut water spurted out into the air. The taste of its milk was quite unlike that of any other coconut, and it was so good that it cannot be described in words. The same day, I found a lot of money in my shirt pockets, about 5,000 kyats. My wife thought that I had stolen it from the shop, and was quite angry with me, but as time went on we found more and more money, and once even a further 10,000 kyats. My wife checked and controlled my actions very closely at the shop, but could not find me at the money. She finally accepted that *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw* was responsible for it. In fact, it was only seven or eight years ago that in the market a storm took place, which foiled the intentions of my wife and I to buy an offering tray (*ka-daw' bwe'*) for *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*, and at the same time money fell onto us from nowhere. With this money we then bought a monk's robe and offered it. Also when building the house, we needed money for cement, and *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw* ensured we had the money straight away. *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw* takes care of our welfare. I have a 'relationship of cause and effect' (*pa-htan' zet*) with *Thu-ya-tha-di* during *Ka-tha-pa's* time, when I was her son.

Yet despite his promise to *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*, it was clear that by 12 November he still had not practised WM seriously. Indeed, he appeared frustrated, and on the 11th he had taken out his anger and frustration on me. His children were helping me to get rid of the bed bugs inside my mattress. (U") Lei" made his appearance, furiously complaining that his children were providing me with everything and were neglecting their own father. By 1 December (U") Lei" had once again openly taken up the beads and appeared to have let go of his promise to practise WM. We had another conversation about one of his former lives:

Ma-nu-ha Min" worshipped in those days a monk called *Ba"me' Hsa-ya-daw*. This *Ba"me' Hsa-ya-daw* became a sage (*weik-za*), and was eventually reborn as the Sun"lun" *Hsa-ya-daw*, my very own teacher of WM just after the war. The Sun"lun" *Hsa-ya-daw* is not enlightened (*ya-han"da*) as so many of his pupils have claimed, for if he were enlightened he would no longer be among people, but he is. In fact, *Ba"me'* used the womb of Sun"lun"s mother to be conceived and thereby to extend his sagehood (*hton ku" thi*). Thus the *Ba"me' /Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw* had come to visit me for the preceding 4 days. I have been visited by the Sun"lun" often before to say that he was taking care of me, and he has told me 'to cross over to insight only after building a pagoda'. The Sun"lun" knew that I had 'made a mistaken prayer' in my past lives.

The next day we went to visit the pagoda which he had helped to repair through his medicinal powers and his concentration practice. (U") Lei" declared to the monks in charge of this pagoda

that he would no longer practise possession by sages (*dat si" thi*),¹¹ but that he intended to raise 3-4,000 kyats in charity for the pagoda.

Not much came of this, and in May (U") Lei" made another attempt to practise WM, when he went to a meditation centre in Pegu. Again he returned much sooner than expected. He told me that sages had informed him that the weather in Min"bu" was cooler now, and that he should return there. He had told his daughter, however, that he had cramp in his leg, and that he did not feel like staying any longer, and had left together with another monk who had fever.

When I pressed (U") Lei" one day for an explanation for this apparent lack of success in WM while he had been so successful just after the war with the Sun"lun" method, (U") Lei"'s answer was surprisingly simple: 'I have a relationship of cause (*pa-htan" zet*) with the Sun"lun", not with the Ma-ha-si'. In other words, it was his early relationship with the Sun"lun" as the Ba"me' Hsa-ya-daw while (U") Lei" was the son of Ma-nu-ha Min" that was an important determinant of his success with the Sun"lun" and his failure with the Ma-ha-si.

By the end of my stay in Burma, (U") Lei" told me, as he had done several times previously, that he was at a cross-roads as to what his future action should be. Either he would continue his concentration meditation and become a sage within a matter of several months. Failing that, he planned to practise charity (*da-na'*) by building a pagoda, after which he would then devote his further life to WM. But he estimated his chances of becoming a sage this time as good, for his teacher was calling him, and was going to reward him for his loyalty by getting him become a sage too. We both laughed at the thought that if he were to be successful, the government may have to pay out his military pension for at least 900 years.

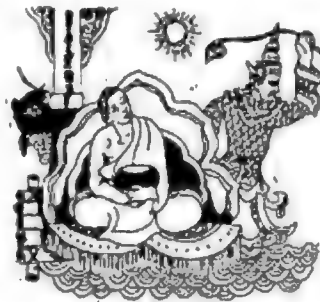
Ba'gyi": a saw-mill worker

(U") Lei"'s dilemma is present in the second of our case studies too, namely Ba'gyi"'s. I met Ba'gyi" or 'Big Grand-father', halfway through my fieldwork in Rangoon. The occasion was a 'drowning of Shin U'pa-gok festival' which he had organised.¹² Ba'gyi" looked, with his little white beard, the way archetypal holy men (*bo"daw*) are popularly portrayed in Burma. He was 55 years old, had a low income, and worked in a saw mill alongside the river. His calm and precision in answering every question classed him amongst the most impressive informants I met in the course of my stay in Burma. My information about him was collected in the course

11 *Dat si" thi* is a term used for allowing oneself to be possessed by a sage. It is different from *nat pu" thi*, *nat kat thi*, *nat win thi*, *nat hpan" thi* etc, in that the latter concern involuntary possession by 'low' spirits, whereas *dat si" thi* indicates voluntary possession by *weik-za* who are thought to have special supernatural powers and to be able to extend their lives beyond the normal human lifespan. An example of this term being used may be found in Hpei Myin' (1979:127).

12 See end-notes, 'Shin U'pa-gok'.

Figure 6. Shin U'pa-gok, the monk saint for which Ba' Gyi" organised a festival. This monk saint is alleged to have control over the weather, and is also invoked to control the weather for the novitiation ceremony (Wi'thu'da 1980:243).



ထရ်ဘုန်းဥပဂတ် ခရ်ငတ်တြ်ဥ

of three interviews. Ba'gyi" made

it a point that he did concentration meditation by himself, and operated completely independently from members of concentration meditation sects.

Like (U") Lei", Ba'gyi" claimed to have achieved powers through meditation, in particular those of diagnosing diseases caused by supernatural agencies and foreseeing the future. When I saw him together with a Burmese friend, a daughter of (U") Lei", at her request, he made some predictions and diagnoses of her relatives without seeing the people concerned. For example, he advised that her father's depression was because he did not have a teacher 'higher' than himself; her brother's marriage partner should be selected by herself rather than her mother; her younger sister's health problems would be remedied by offering coconut to the Buddha and then eating all of it. The problems he tackled were manifold, and the way he analysed and expressed them did inspire a degree of confidence.

The way he talked about his religious experiences in his early life was revealing, and showed the importance of morality as a basis for meditational success:

When I was young I used to observe the moral precepts very strictly, and I never lied or stole. When I offered the sacred Eugenia (*tha-byei*) to the Buddha, the leaves remained green already when I was very young, remaining fresh for very long, longer than with anyone else I knew. Normally they dry up within a day. I soon started practising concentration (*tha-ma-hia*) using the rosary, and as my concentration was good I could see ghosts (*thu-ye*) and spirits (*nat*). I could ask them questions, which they would answer.

Eventually he started his WM practice:

Then one day I was invited by a friend to an offering at a meditation centre, that of the The-ingu Hsa-ya-daw. I liked it there, and I wanted to learn how to practise WM. After I had been practising this for a while, I soon started to hate everything that had to do with concentration.

This sudden dislike for concentration meditation was punctuated by a 'concentration drowning festival':

I held a concentration drowning festival, in which I put all the statues I possessed of sages (*weik-za*), spirits (*nat*), and everything that had to do with concentration onto a raft and sent it off into the river. I invited many people on that occasion, and fed them vegetarian noodles. In the end I was left with not even the coconut house spirit.¹³ I no longer prescribed medicine or treated

13 Min" Ma-ha-gi-ri" is the Burmese house guardian spirit for which a dedication is found in most Burmese homes.

cases, and no longer did I see spirits. However, at the end of the ceremony, when I was meditating, a holy man (*bo"daw*) appeared who was seen by my wife. I did not see him. It was my personal guardian holy man.

Like (U") Lei, Ba'gyi" could not stick to WM alone and reverted to concentration meditation:

After practising WM for a while I had to work a lot, and simply did not have the time for regular meditation. My mind started to change again. While for the period I was practising WM I did not see any spirits, I then began to see them again. I saw holy men and spirits whom I had not seen since I practised concentration last. From then on, I started to practise concentration again.

Indeed, Ba'gyi" had visibly reinstated the various statues of holy men and the coconut for Min" Ma-ha-gi-ri' at his the Buddha shrine. There were also offerings of coconuts to his guardian and teacher, the Sri Lanka Bo"daw (Thi-ho Bo"daw), also known as Ma-hein-da-ka'. Ba'gyi" claimed to be related to Ma-hein-da-ka' in a former life long ago in Sri Lanka. In this life he met him first in Rangoon and later on Mount Popa.

I was puzzled about this switching between concentration and WM, and I asked why, if he recognised WM as the higher ideal, he should revert back to concentration meditation. Was this not regress in the quest for truth?

I am practising 'worldly religion' (*law"ki tha-tha-na pyu' thi*) which excludes the Four Noble Truths. This is the practice of concentration, the distribution of medicine, the building of pagodas, and so forth. I am not practising 'otherworldly religion' which involves the realisation of the Four Noble Truths through WM.¹⁴

His consistent explanation—for he repeatedly asserted this during interviews—was that:

I do this because I happened to have prayed wrongly (*hsu' taung" hma" thi*) for this in my past lives. I happened to have made the wrong resolution in the past (*a-deik-han hma" thi*). Instead of praying for 'otherworldly' religion I prayed for 'worldly' religion, and I now therefore have to 'undergo and eat the debts of sin'.

On the other hand, Ba'gyi" did not thereby diminish his important achievements in the field of WM. He held that his earlier practice of WM qualified him to be reborn as a Ma-ha-gan-da-ri',¹⁵ for though he did not emphasise the Four Noble Truths in his present work, he had discovered them through his earlier WM practice.

In fact, his claim to the first stage in the WM hierarchy of achievement (*thaw"da-ban*) developed as follows. Statements about WM achievements are rarely made openly, as this is explicitly prohibited in Buddhism. Furthermore, the criteria are vague. From my knowledge of the stages of sainthood, I decided to find out where he saw himself located. After all, he had expressed that he was *ma-ha gan-da-ri*, and had therefore become a saint. I asked him whether he 'would not fall into the nether hells any longer'. Streamwinner (*thaw"da-ban*), the first stage of sainthood, is meant to convey this. My friend, clearly aware what I was getting at, interrupted

14 However, successful practice of *wi'pat-tha-na* requires *tha-ma-ha*', and as this is what Ba'gyi" was practising, he firmly established himself on the path to 'otherworldly religion' and by implication assessed critically those *wi'pat-tha-na* meditators who did not have sufficient 'concentration'.

15 See end-notes, *weik-za, ma-ha-gan-da-ri/su-la'gan-da-ri*.

me in my questioning, and said that such a thing can never be claimed by anyone. I responded that I asked whether he 'thought' he would possibly be reborn in hell in the future, not whether he 'was definitely not' to be reborn in the hells. Ba'gyi" praised me for my perceptiveness and chided my friend for her 'softness' of mind. In this way he implicitly conveyed to us his status, while not claiming it outright, as would have been improper. His wife, however, made the point quite openly: 'of course he is at least a streamwinner'.

Ba'gyi" had been 'making resolutions' (*a-deik-htan thi*) to devote himself to complete religious practice for limited periods. Like (U") Lei" he took upon himself to follow a vegetarian diet as much as possible, devoting himself to intensive concentration meditation at the same time. The higher spirits and sages (*weik-za*) dislike the smell of people who eat meat, but they like vegetarians.¹⁶ He claimed that by doing this not only had he received the capacity 'to hear and see' like (U") Lei, but he had found cures for diseases which the medical doctors could not treat, such as cancer and heart disease. For his cures he did not receive fees as such, though people would occasionally give something out of gratitude. He frequently advised people to make offerings, either at novitiations, to pagodas, to monks and so forth in lieu of payment. Unlike (U") Lei" he did not express the wish to build a pagoda as a first priority. His first priority was to spend his retirement in three years time in further pursuit of concentration.

Hsa-ya-lei": a meditating hermitess

Hsa-ya-lei" or 'Little Teacher' was a nun—a hermitess according to her own saying—residing at a meditation centre in Upper Burma. She had been closely involved in setting up this centre in the late 1940s, and lived in it for over thirty years. She had been closely involved in generating finance to keep the centre going. I had about fifteen lengthy interviews with her over a period of three months. Officially she was in charge of running the catering services, but unofficially she ran the centre virtually single-handed. She also helped to solve problems meditators faced, particularly those of female *yaw"gi*. I had finally found someone who was prepared to unveil some of the secrets that teachers of WM—particularly at the Ma-ha-si centres—had refused to talk to me about. She was very forthcoming and open about her life and her relationships with the people around her.

16 Vegetarianism, apart from being an act of 'loving-kindness' so important to the practice of *tha-ma-hla'*, also means that one adopts aspects of the diet of higher beings who do not eat meat. Thus my own vegetarianism was interpreted as inviting the protection by higher beings.

Hsa-ya-lei" claimed to be a 'hermitess' (*ya-thei'ma*) and not a 'nun' (*thi-la'yin*).¹⁷ She indicated that she was not a nun because she wore brown instead of pink robes, and because she kept the Ten Precepts rather than the Nine or Eight Precepts kept by nuns.

She came from a merchant family trading in lime in Mandalay. When she was young her mother contracted Bubonic plague. Though she responded to treatment and recovered, she was never again able to do any work. Hsa-ya-lei"'s father died of tuberculosis when she was fourteen. There was no one to take care of the children. At the age of thirteen, while her parents were ill, she was put in the care of a merchant lady who sold jaggery, and with whom she worked to maintain her five younger sisters. The lady at the market taught her all the secrets of business until the age of nineteen, when she set up a little shop of her own, selling household goods such as soap and matches. Hsa-ya-lei" traded like this until the age of thirty, when the event of the illness and subsequent death of her mother's sister, her favourite aunt, took place. This aunt had lived with the family, where she helped to take care of Hsa-ya-lei"'s mother and sisters; Hsa-ya-lei" regarded her as a mother. When this aunt was ill in the hospital, people in the hospital used to comment on how Hsa-ya-lei" took care of her aunt as if she were her mother.

It was at this time of stress during the illness of her aunt that her interest in WM evolved:

At that time I met a market saleswoman who was somewhat older than I. In a conversation with her my morale was not improved; she told me that the way most people lived in this world was bound to lead to rebirth in the lower four abodes. The only way out was to meditate. A man who had founded a meditation centre was then running a transport company, paddling onions and garlic between Taungyi and Mandalay. I was told that he knew a lot about Buddhism. His teaching, so the market sales woman told me, was a teaching which could free from rebirth in the nether hells.

I went to see him, and for the first time ever I forgot about my shop, and no longer considered it the most important thing in my life. I started meditating by myself for about seven days off and on when I was free from work. The meditation teacher travelled, going to Inlei, Rangoon, Sa-gaing" and Mingun, and I dearly wanted to attend his preachings in Sa-gaing", but my mother did not want me to go. To my mind it was a shame not to go to hear this very important means of release of rebirth. Eventually I went in spite of my mother's objections to attend the first meditation course the meditation teacher gave in Mandalay. It was held in a building owned by the market sales woman, and we were asked to bring along five people for the course each, to make it worthwhile.

17 Most Burmese Buddhists regard nuns as having low status, but increasingly there are Burmese Buddhists who admire nuns, particularly those who take exams in scriptural learning at high level. As Mo'hnyin" nuns are high regarded, Hsa-ya Lei" preferred to be associated with that tradition (See also Mendelson 1975:146).

I asked Hsa-ya-lei" to recount her experiences during her first course of meditation, which she did somewhat reluctantly¹⁸:

The experiences of destruction and birth (*hpyit-pyet*)¹⁹ were many and fast. My experience of these developed in two phases. First it felt as if dough or wet sand was coming out of my body and particularly out of my head, and was slowly dripping onto the ground. During the second phase I felt as if only smoke was coming out of my body, going upwards. This latter phase showed that I had made some progress, for they were sensations of a less gross nature. I was later told that after smoke come sensations of essence (*a-ngwei*), which is even finer. I soon had no sensations in the body anymore, nor of mind, and I felt as if I could see the constituent elements of my body. Instead of feeling 'shapeful' I was conscious of the various constituent elements of the body. At the time I did not realize the significance of these experiences, but when I saw the meditation teacher he approved of them, and explained to me that it was the experience of impermanence. I was not convinced, and still felt I did not know what impermanence was about. I did not understand the reality of the birth-destruction process, and only believed what I could see with my eyes. Another experience I had was that I saw three benefactors²⁰ in front of my eyes: my mother, Daw U, and Daw T. I cried and I wanted to return to them the debt of gratitude. I returned the debt of gratitude to them by teaching them meditation.

I asked how Hsa-ya-lei" felt after the experience when she returned home.

It affected my life immediately. I could, for example, no longer smear *tha-na-hka*²¹ onto my face. I would no longer wear beautiful clothing. In fact I never smeared *tha-na-hka* or wore beautiful clothing again. Though I did go to my usual work at the market, I found that I could no longer chat in the usual market language. I no longer performed my work properly, and it became a problem to my younger sisters and my mother.

Hsa-ya-lei" explained how she invited all three of her 'benefactors' whom she had seen in the course of the first session:

Two of them did not need much convincing to come along, but Daw T had cancer at the time, and her family did not like the idea of her going out to meditate. But when I cried, she understood how much it meant to me, and came. She died shortly after meditating.

I asked Hsa-ya-lei" to explain to me her feelings during the second meditation phase:

It was during this period that the meaning of the Buddha's teachings became suddenly clear to me. Here I went up onto the *nyan-zin*.²² Yet it all happened in stages and as I progressed I got at once terribly frightened, and began to see this whole progression of experiences as an enemy. I desperately tried to get rid of this fear, and I cried terribly. I went to see the meditation teacher, who said that I should face this fear—that I should go back and meditate through it. He preached and encouraged me a lot. I just did not know what to do with my body. I could not run away from the sensations, for they were in my head. I could not discard my body. Yet the encouragement by my teacher made me face my fears, and I continued. After some more meditation I found my way out, and my knowledge about impermanence became clear. Had I escaped and run away, I would have never had this experience. My fear was the fear of intuitive

18 Meditation experiences should not be talked about openly

19 *Hpyit-pyet* is commonly used in some meditation methods to refer to the feelings of air flowing in and out of the nostrils. The experience of this leads to *tha-na-hka* after which an intuitive awareness of impermanence is aimed at, i.e. birth and destruction of all phenomena.

20 *Kyei* "zu" *shin*, or 'masters of grace' denotes formally a class of ten beings which includes: the Buddha; silent Buddhas; the Buddha's left and right hand disciples; one's mother; one's father; those who are more noble in age, qualities, morality and so forth than oneself; those who feed and dress one; those who teach one the *taya* (*ta-ya*) (Buddhist teachings). During subsequent conversations with Hsa-ya Lei" it became apparent that she was fervently anti-communist because 'they did not know their benefactors'.

21 The bark root of the *tha-na-hka* tree is used by women pounded and then smeared onto their faces as a cooling beauty cream.

22 *Nyan-zin* is the 12 point scale of progression of *wi'pat-thana* as laid down in the commentaries. See end-notes, *nyan-zin*.

realisation of impermanence, but lacking the realisation that there was a way out of suffering—disease, old age and death, and lacking the realisation that insight was the answer to all this. I have never told anyone these experiences except my teacher, not even my closest friend.

What happened when you returned home that time, I asked.

When I returned home I just gave up all the work at the market, and this caused big problems, as my younger sisters had no knowledge of buying and selling. Before meditating I had always been fascinated by market life: I used to be the last to leave the store, and when the gong went I just went on working until all the others had packed up. But after meditation I just wanted to drop it all.

When I asked for Hsa-ya-lei's experiences during the third meditation period, she said:

I do not want to talk about it. It is improper to do so. If people hear it and say *tha-du', tha-du', tha-du'*,²³ then all is well, but if they do not believe it or were to be jealous, then it would be an obstacle to their spiritual quest.

But she did tell me eventually—and not altogether reluctantly.

Through this experience of the realisation of birth-destruction I knew impermanence, where there was nothing left. During the third sitting I faced up to this: I was looking at my mind which was in my heart. It was no longer, it was destroyed. There was at once nothing to look anymore, and the process of becoming-destruction had come to an end.

I asked what happened on return home after this experience:

On return home I could not live there anymore. I could not even talk about things, this was all worldly talk. I had the urge only to talk and read of 'otherworldly' things.

Hsa-ya-lei proposed an interesting idea, namely that WM is 'an avenue to short-cut fate' (*kan hpyat lan*), where the 'sensations' (*wei-da-na*) experienced during a meditation sitting are nothing but the 'undergoing of the debts of rebirth' (*wut-kywei' hkan sa" thi*). In other words, WM practice 'kills' (*that thi*) the retributions of past deeds which would have otherwise been suffered in reality at some stage, some life, in the future. Hsa-ya-lei told me about her experience.

I had the experience of feeling like a fish on land, and at one stage I rolled about like mad exactly like a fish on land. No less than three people had to hold me, so violently did I shake.

Hsa-ya-lei, who had devoted her life to meditation, and given so much of her life to the centre, was nevertheless deeply disappointed with the state of affairs. She had donated a monastery just inside the compound of the centre in the hope that the monks would take an active interest in teaching and studying meditation. They did not, and merely went their way insisting on doing scriptural learning. Also, the rest of the meditation centre administration opposed her ideas, and she became known as 'airplane' because of her efficiency in buying up goods at the market for the *yaw"gi*, and as 'Hitler' for her efforts at controlling the centre's affairs. She was also known jokingly as sage (*weik-za*), for her continued interest in 'concentration' meditation and the occult. Indeed, her initiative in building a pagoda was largely financed by people not unlike (U") Lei,

23 *Tha-du'*, literally 'good', is said three times as a recognition of meritorious action. It is usually said at the end of offerings somewhat like the Christian 'amen'.

bona fide practitioners of royal charity (*da-na*), seeking to establish themselves firmly onto the path of concentration and sagehood, rather than WM and purity.

The case studies reviewed

The case studies are not altogether representative of Burmese Buddhists. To begin with, not everyone meditates. The case studies were middle-aged and above, and, with no young children to take care of, had perhaps more time than younger people with families. Also, they were not educated beyond sixth form and are more representative of that section of Burmese Buddhists who have colourful folkloric notions about meditation than that section who, combining practical meditation with deep scriptural study, have very sophisticated views.

Though not representative the case studies nevertheless illustrate several points about the status of WM in the lives of meditators. They show how WM refers to more than just a meditation technique, but also to a new form of knowledge, a new state of being. WM had profound effects on their life styles, their views, and their social relationships. Indeed, it served to make them into different people who related to their environment, their friends and relatives, in unexpected, different ways. Hsa-ya Lei" lost interest in her shop and eventually renounced into the robes of a hermitess. (U") Lei" lost his proper business sense at the market and fell out with his wife. In so far as I knew him, Ba'gyi" was the exception here—he managed to hold his life in balance and had undergone least change with reference to his immediate social environment and family. Perhaps his lack of wealth, his being a sole earner for his family, and his sense of responsibility prevented him from considering complete renunciation.

The case of U" Lei" case demonstrates how an individual *yaw"gi* may visit different centres to practise different WM methods in the course of a life time. Also, the case studies of (U") Lei" and Ba'gyi", who practised their meditation mainly outside the meditation centre, demonstrate that the meditation centre need not be the universe of religious experience of its meditators at all. Hsa-ya Lei" made the meditation centre her home, but such are only a tiny minority of *yaw"gi*.

The case studies bear out how monkhood remains an important reference point in the lives of individual meditators. Thus (U") Lei" repetitively ordains, and Hsa-ya Lei" attempts to introduce learned monks to teach at the meditation centre. But monkhood is also an important source of tension as shown in (U") Lei" 's experience of being reprimanded by the meditation centre monk, and Hsa-ya Lei" 's thwarted efforts to domesticate monks to practise and teach meditation at the centre instead of being dedicated to scriptural learning.

Finally, we come to a point that we will consider further in the rest of this chapter. This is that WM practice—contrary to the widely-preached ideal that it is the ultimate and highest practice in Buddhism—may represent but one phase in the lives of most *yaw"gi*. Above all, the element of choice already seen with reference to choice of method and of meditation centre, is also present

with reference to the type of religious action which individuals conceive of as important at any one moment—WM, concentration or charity. Religious careers do not *end* at WM. The case studies were all loners in their quest for knowledge and purity—theirs was not a collective but an individual quest—and so their formulation of courses of action was not prescribed, but was based on cumulative personal experience and personal calculation of alternative strategies, all with results desirable for different reasons at different times. This optionality introduced a sense of excitement, but also a sense of doubt and uncertainty which (U") Lei" in particular suffered from. The oscillations by (U") Lei and Ba-gyi between WM and 'concentration' were quite remarkable. Hsa-ya Lei" was evidently dedicated to WM, though even she expressed a discernable, albeit disguised, interest in concentration meditation and its associated paraphernalia, such as the rosaries and the worldly sages. That this did not go unnoticed among meditation centre visitors was evident from her nickname 'sage' (*weik-za*).

As for this last point, the case studies also show a close relation between charity and meditational achievement. In particular, the powers derived through concentration were used to get donations for pagodas and monasteries. (U") Lei" repaired a pagoda and, when I left him, was in doubt whether to put concentration first, or to do charity and then dedicate himself entirely to WM. Hsa-ya Lei" received money for the big pagoda which would mark the meditation centre for future generations. This allowed concentration meditators to build or take responsibility for large sacred edifices such as pagodas in the old style 'royal' manner. This, in turn, generated the merit necessary to achieve more difficult and more distant WM meditational goals.

'Concentration' (*tha-ma-hta'*) vs. 'insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na*).

'To meditate' is a western term meaning, '1. plan mentally, design', or '2. exercise the mind in (esp. religious) contemplation (*on* or *upon* subject)' (OED). But for Burmese Buddhists 'meditation' (*ba-wa-na*) involves two specific but fundamentally different types of activity, namely meditation aiming towards the goal of 'insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na*), and meditation aiming towards the goal of 'concentration' (P *samatha*, B. *tha-ma-hta'*).²⁴

In this chapter we have so far noted how individual meditators were irresistibly attracted towards these two types of meditation at different times of their lives. This oscillation is reminiscent of the cyclical historical motions of 500 year periods at a time between alternating

24 'Concentration' (*tha-ma-di'* or *tha-ma-hta'*) has a very complex meaning in the scriptures and commentaries. See end-notes, *tha-ma-hta'*. This concentration-insight distinction, unlike the scriptural learning-practice distinction, does not derive specifically from a divided specialty in the monastic world, but has its own varied dimensions of meaning amongst the unordained laity. Nevertheless, as we shall find in the course of this chapter, there is a close relationship between scriptural learning and concentration meditation, for they are both oriented to concept and image, an orientation which WM tries to transcend.

popularity of WM, concentration, scriptural learning, morality, and charity already noted in chapter 3.

An explanation of all the dimensions which distinguish WM and concentration would be too complex to attempt here. A thesis in itself would not be sufficient, let alone a brief chapter such as this one. But what is apparent is that there is a great deal of disagreement about this relationship between different Burmese Buddhists. At the beginning of this chapter we noted how the Ma-ha-si, who was of course an experienced and extremely learned teacher of WM, complained about the enormous confusion about the distinction he found around him. This was addressed particularly to people like (U") Lei" and Ba'gyi" who were meddling in meditation without close teaching guidance, and were oscillating between WM and concentration depending on how they felt at any one time. This conflict in interpretation was demonstrated when (U") Lei" got kicked out of the WM centre—his behaviour was proto-typical of the behaviour which worries WM teachers in their pupils. Yet people like (U") Lei" do not see things in quite that light—they feel they have knowledge in their own right, they are achieving spectacular things, and they do not need to listen to teachers. The short-sharp-meditation shocks in the centre were therefore not sufficient to impart to the *yaw"gi* all values to do with WM. They do so for a period perhaps, as happened to Ba' Gyi" and (U") Lei" who spent a few years loyal to a particular WM method. But as *yaw"gi* are not part of a congregation which meets regularly, such as happens with Sunday preaching in the western Christian churches, doctrines cannot be refreshed in their minds, and these lay Buddhists float about in life from aim to aim and from purpose to purpose. This individualised understanding of meditation on one's own terms, the way (U") Lei", Ba' Gyi"²⁵ did is reminiscent of what we noted in chapter 2; with time, different individual *ba-tha* construct the *tha-tha-na* (the teachings) differently, even though each *ba-tha* conceives of and explains the *da-ma'* (the underlying meanings and realisation of the teachings) as remaining unchanged. As most of these contemporary popular interpretations are not supported by the scriptures, below follows a description of such folkloristic distinctions.

To illustrate the simplest yet most complete way of understanding the salient features of this distinction, below are two typical sketches of different meditators' ideas about these two. A concentration meditator, who considered concentration meditation a branch of mathematics, explained to me *his* somewhat folkloristic method of meditation:

'I build a pagoda by telling one round of the beads of my rosary. This goes as follows. The rosary has 108 beads, which correspond to the 108 marks on the footsole of the Buddha; $108 = 1+8 = 9$, which corresponds to the 9 qualities of the Buddha which set him apart from human beings as the most supreme of all beings; $108 \text{ divided by } 9 \text{ results in } 12$, corresponding to the 12 months of the year; $9-1 \text{ (1 derived from } 108) = 8 \text{ (8 derived from } 108)$, which corresponds to the 8 days of the

25 This applies to a lesser extent to Hsa-ya Lei"

week (in the astrological week Wednesday is divided into two days); the 8 days of the week correspond to the 8 cardinal directions into which a pagoda is divided... Hence, when I perform one round of counting the beads, I am building a pagoda'.

In sharp contrast, I recall myself asking an experienced WM meditator a question about a painting which I had seen hanging in a pagoda.²⁶ This painting consisted of two scenes, showing two different views of the world side by side. The left-hand side showed an orchestra in full colours with people dancing with evident enjoyment, while the right-hand side of the painting showed a transposition of this whole scene of dancing and enjoyment into its disembodied equivalent, with just skeletons. Happy with this as a pictorial representation of WM knowledge, I put my views on WM to the test with this *yaw"gi* in terms of this painting. The reply was invariably 'It is but a picture, it is not *your* practical knowledge'.

The Sunlun (n.d.:4) preached that 'Samatha is concerned with the universe as it is for us; — vipassana is concerned with the universe as it is in itself'. Furthermore, he held that 'whatever makes the universe for us leads to samatha; whatever artifact we construct, whatever idea, image, thought, or concept we create leads to samatha.' This is not to say that the Buddha always disapproved of linguistic or conceptual techniques in meditation. The Buddha gave a clean white handkerchief to Du-nu'ban and asked him to recite the words *ya-zaw" ya-han"* while rubbing the white towel with his fingers. As the towel became dirty while reciting thus, so Du-nu'ban understood that all was impermanent and subject to defilement. But concentration is not about realising destruction or impermanence, but about amplifying and strengthening particular images and concepts—by means of visualisation and memorisation—until these can be controlled at will by mind. The concentration meditator built a pagoda, a visible act of great religious merit, in steps. At each point mind-control transformed one image into another through the symbolic language of mathematics. Each number stood for a particular mythical representation of the Buddha (the 108 marks on his footsoles, his 9 qualities, and the 8 cardinal directions of the pagoda commemorating the Buddha). Concepts and material objects are chained together by manipulation—through division, addition and association—which set in motion a train of events from thought of the glory of the Buddha to achieving the prestigious act of charity by making a physical commemorative representation of the Buddha.

If concentration meditation is about *controlling* change to an instrumental purpose, WM is about knowing oneself inevitably *being controlled by* change, living it and noticing it all the time in oneself and around one, thereby becoming impregnated with an awareness of it, and from there on hopefully extinguishing the desires and impulses which make for rebirth in life. Unlike

26 See photo 1. KN believed this scene to represent the orchestra and dancers as observed by Shin Tha-ri'p'ok-ta-ra and Shin Mauk-ga-lan before they renounced, when they practised *a'thu'ba'ka-ma-htan"*.



Photo 7. The manipulation of symbolic language is not limited to the 'folkloric' type concentration meditators.. The symbolism associated with pagodas is rich and lends itself well to building new realities. The Tuesday Eastern corner of a pagoda is associated with the symbol of the lion, the planet Mars, the quality of honesty, the number of 8 years, and the letters sa', hsa', za', nya'. Pagodas are divided into eight corners, corresponding to the 8 cardinal directions, and worship at a pagoda is systematised within this constellation of symbols, where respect is paid at the corner belonging to the day of one's birth, and the type of offering made conforms by starting with the letter belonging to the same day and corner. Burmese personal names also start with the letters belonging to the day of birth.

concentration meditation, which allows the meditator to exercise an element of control, WM allows the meditator only a deeper knowledge of the truths of life, of real life according to the true *da-ma'*, which is closely associated with the knowledge of impermanence and change. This view of WM as a dynamic experiential knowledge based on personal practice is also clear from Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's (1965:31) comment:

Of the three knowledges of Insight, the knowledge Impermanence must first and foremost be acquired. How? If we carefully watch the cinematograph show, we will see how quick are the changes of the numerous series of photographs representing the wonderful scene, all in a moment of time. We will also see that a hundred or more photographs are required to represent the scene of a moving body. These are, in fact...the representation of Impermanence of Death, or cessation of movements. If we carefully examine the movements in a scene, such as the walking, standing sitting, sleeping, bending, stretching, and so forth, of the parts of the body during a moment of time, we will see that these are full of changes, or full of Impermanence. Even in a moment of walking, in a single step taken with the foot, there are numerous changes of pictures which may be called Impermanence or death. It is also the same with the rest of the movements. Now we must apply this to ourselves. The Impermanence and the death of mental and material phenomena are to be found to the full in our bodies, our heads, and in every part of the body. If we are able to discern clearly those functions of impermanence and death which are always operating in our bodies, we shall acquire the Insight of the Destruction, the breaking-up, the

falling-off, cessation, and changes of the various parts of the body in each second, in each fraction of a second....If it be thus discerned, then it may be said that the exercise on the contemplation of impermanence is well accomplished. And if the exercise on the contemplation of impermanence is well accomplished, then that of the contemplation on Non-soul is also accomplished. If this is thus discerned, then it may be said that the exercise on the contemplation of Impermanence is well accomplished. By the word "accomplishment" is meant that the exercise has been properly worked out so as to continue a permanent possession during the whole term of life; but it is not meant that the knowledge of the Path and Fruition, has been attained.

WM is thus to *contemplate and know change*—i.e. contemplating the fleeting nature and insubstantiality of one's body and mind, and of all body and mind—whereas concentration meditation is to *control change* by fixing it, manipulating it, and making it serve a purpose. It is interesting that while the Burmese concentration meditator saw concentration meditation as a branch of mathematics, Daniel Goleman (1978:xix), after much searching, felt he could clarify the two Buddhist meditation types by characterising concentration as One, a relatively unproblematic concept in mathematics, and WM as the most problematic of concepts in mathematics, namely Zero:

Strange terms and concepts assailed me: each path seemed to be in essence the same as every other path, but each had its own way of explaining how to travel it and what major landmarks to expect. I was confused. Things first began to jell in my understanding, though, with a remark by Joseph Goldstein, a teacher of insight meditation at Bodh Gaya. It's simple mathematics, he said: All meditation systems either aim for One or Zero—union with God or emptiness. The path to the One is through concentration on Him, to the Zero is insight into the voidness of one's mind. This was my first guideline for sorting out meditation techniques.'

Both types of knowledge are of course highly personal as each person experiences and conceptualises them differently and hence there is quite a lot of disagreement between *yaw"gi*. But one thing is clear, where concentration meditators tend to have no difficulty in communicating their knowledge, WM *yaw"gi* tend to agree that WM knowledge defies language and concept. Not only did the concentration meditator above consider it possible to meditate by manipulating language and image, but he also found it quite possible to convey these experiences in language and discuss them with me, where the complete reverse was the case with the WM meditator. It remains therefore that language, like photography, film, and memory, are with respect to WM totally inadequate media, because they give fixity to what are really changing meanings and entities. The fluid and elusive WM knowledge can never be fully captured and represented, it can only be experienced personally. In WM all conventional realities and material phenomena (including language and cinema) are in the process dissolved into the fleeting and impermanent entities they *really* are; WM is neither about controlling specific objects by means of visualisation or memorisation, or even of free association, but only to observe and to accept that mind and matter come and go; to observe the birth and death of phenomena and to accept it.

Some key differences

Underlying the popular perception of these two types of meditation are a number of key points of difference.

Though there is no clear cut-off point, the Buddha's life is structured by concentration and WM into two distinct periods: one prior to enlightenment, while he practised a variety of concentration techniques which he ultimately rejected as unsatisfactory,²⁷ and the brief period leading up to and subsequent to his enlightenment, when he discovered, practised and taught WM. This provides 'Buddhist' legitimacy to both types of practices.

The hierarchies of achievement are different. Concentration meditation achievements follow the hierarchy of the 'trances' (*zan*). WM achievements, on the other hand, are specifically based on progress through the Noble Eightfold Path to the 'progress of insight' (*nyan-zin*).²⁸ The latter path ends up in the four saintly (*a-ri'ya*) stages of achievement: the 'streamwinner' (*thaw"da-ban*), 'once-returner' (*tha-ga-da-gan*), 'never-returner' (*a-na-gan*), and arahat (*ya-han"da*).²⁹ The way this difference is regarded by many WM teachers is exemplified by Lerner's (1977:125) statement that 'Teachers in Burma had told me that these states of *Jhana* are dangerous. They are the road to power, not wisdom.'

The goals of these techniques are declared as distinctly different. Whereas WM leads to 'purity' and *neik-ban*, concentration meditation leads to 'power' and the pleasures associated

27 These rejections by the Buddha of the concentration methods taught by Alara and Udaka, and later the Buddha's practice alone of the austerity exercises such as clenching the tongue against the palate, withholding his breath, fasting, are well described by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (1981c:12,14,17,22,28), '...by this gruelling asceticism I have not attained any distinction higher than the ordinary human achievement; I have not gained the Noble One's knowledge and vision which could uproot the defilements. Might there be another way to Enlightenment apart from this path of torture and mortification?'

The WM methodology is suggested by the four contemplations (*nu'pat-tha-na*) preached in the Buddha's First Sermon after his enlightenment.

28 See end-notes, '*nyan-zin*'.

29 See end-notes, '*a-ri'ya*', '*thaw"da-ban*', '*tha-ga-da-gan*', '*a-na-gan*', '*ya-han"da*'.

with rebirth in the *bya'ma* heavens.³⁰ WM can only be practised (in the ideal) with the aim of achieving cessation (*neik-ban*) through the intuitive realisation of the fundamental Buddhist truths. Indeed, among WM *yaw"gi* I encountered a refusal to see the goal or motivation of WM as being in any way linked to secular aims.³¹ With concentration meditation, on the other hand, one can aim to achieve any one or more of the 10 powers (*da-go"* or *a-bein-nyan*) such as: the creation of many from one single individual, the conversion of many individuals into a single individual, the power of flight, the ability to go underneath the earth, divine hearing, knowledge of thoughts of others, knowledge of former existence, divine vision, and the capacity of knowing all that is taking place in the universe. The powers are spectacular and are apt to be associated with different types of sensual pleasure.³²

Concentration meditation is a general-purpose instrument for secular achievement, and may be used in order to earn religious merit (*ku'tho*), to achieve a major act of charity, or for more mundane purposes such as achieving 'success' (*aung myin thi*), to obtain supernatural protection, passing an exam, writing a thesis, or becoming rich. Various specialists in sorcery and medicine tend to practise concentration meditation, which they feel provides enhanced efficacy to their remedies—medicine, alchemic stones, cabalistic squares, and so forth. Though WM may lead to improved health for the practitioner, this is as a side-effect only, but WM has no efficacy in

30 The difference in the role of power in concentration and WM is in fact part of the Visuddhimagga definition of 'power' (P. *iddhi*):

"Psychic powers" ... Like a child lying on its back and like tender corn it is difficult to manage. It is broken by the slightest thing. It is an impediment to insight, but not to concentration, because it ought to be obtained when concentration is obtained. Therefore one who desires insight should cut off the impediment of psychic powers..." (Pe Maung Tin 1921-5:113).

31 King (1980:123) put this very point as one of the general features of Burmese meditational method in a somewhat different manner,

"The popular "new" methods emphasize strongly the inherently contrasting yogic-jhanic and vipassana practices. For the jhanic tends toward direct body-mind control and the actual cutting off of ordinary sensibility and thought, but the vipassanic specifically seeks to be a method of sheer observation of body-mind in activity, thought, and feeling. Its "control", such as there is, is thus auxiliary and indirect, a fruit and by-product of vipassana practice.

King (1980:143) pursued this theme of *tha-ma-hta'*-control versus *wi'pat-tha-na*-observation, and asks, 'does the Sunlun method genuinely conform to the supposed vipassana pattern of observation (only) of the fluxing process that comprises the person—and by extension, the whole world—or is there a jhana-type control and production of subjective phenomena by the rough-breathing and held-breath technique? .. the answer is not absolutely clear, for the line between these two types of method seems indistinct'.

32 KN held that (U") Lei" and Ba'gyi" both wanted to find enlightenment through WM practice, but they were way-laid by the pleasures and powers associated with concentration meditation.



Figure 7. This illustration was taken from the cover of a book entitled 'Methods of worldly sage knowledge and gan-da-ri concentration knowledge (Law'ki hnin' weik-za pyin-nya hnin' gan-da-ri tha-ma-hta' ka-thaing' pyin-nya). From left to right the characters represent: a bo'daw (lit. grandfather) whose clothing is similar to that of the master of ceremonies (beik-theik hsa-ya), a hermit (ya-thei'), a monk (hpon'gyi'), and a zaw-gyi. Note that they all have a rosary so indispensable to the stereotypical concentration meditator; also the hair on the chin of the latter, which is often found on the chins of the hermit and 'grand-father' as well (with the exception of the monk).

helping to improve other people's health. Soldiers also tend to practise concentration meditation but rarely WM.

Though both WM and concentration meditation may be practised by individuals privately, in a group context they are institutionalised differently. Concentration practice often goes together with initiation into mystical, secretive sects called 'groups' (gaing"), whereas WM does not involve secret initiation, but takes place openly, predominantly in the meditation centres. Accomplished concentration practitioners are known as 'worldly sages' (law'ki weik-za) or 'group sages' (gaing" weik-za). Some aim to time their rebirth to coincide with *da-tu' neik-ban*, the time when all the Buddha's relics will come together, estimated to be in about 2,500 years from now. WM *yaw"gi*, on the other hand, characteristically express their desire to leave the cycle of rebirths, and do not clamour after prolonging their lifespan beyond its natural course.

The symbolism is different. Concentration deals with concepts and material entities, such as alchemic stones, medicine, cabalistic squares, mantras, and rosaries³³, and is closely bound up with encounters with about hermits, and supernatural entities such as *weik-za* and *bo'daw*. But

33 Hnit Hpet Hla' (1979) describes the history of the beads, and Thu-ri'ya' Pan-deik (1979) describes the various methods of counting beads. The latter source (pp 243-44) claims that neither the Buddha nor the holy ones (*ya-han"da*) of his time used the rosaries, and that it was a foreign Islamic and Hindu custom not recommended in the Pali scriptures but that it is nevertheless an appropriate instrument for gaining merit by Buddhists. See also Hla Baw (1940) JARS

WM deals only with the immediate relationship between the practitioner and the laws of the *da-ma'*, seeking the progression of intuitive knowledge of suffering, impermanence, and non-self.³⁴

Government attitudes and declared policies toward these two types of meditation are different. While the military Government tolerated WM practice (the immediate post-Independence Burmese government encouraged it), it was not pleased with the unorthodox concentration meditator whose aspirations to power introduce an element of political instability. Many concentration meditation practitioners, both laymen and monks, have been arrested over the last few years, and the powers derived from concentration meditation—such as those of flight and transformation—are censored from Burmese films. This policy extends to stories about ghosts, witchcraft and thrillers, which are thought to confuse the general public, along with stories about aspirant *weik-za*.³⁵ Books on these topics were also snatched from bookshops and their publication forbidden. On the other hand, WM is regarded



Figure 8. The stereotype of the concentration meditator *bo'daw* is the subject of ridicule, as illustrated on the cover of *Min Shin Naung* (n.d.). The *bo'daw* is portrayed as the *ya* 'O' (wa'), ~~common~~ which happens to be on a pedestal will no longer be during Sunday; the ~~elicit a~~ *again?* *ridicule*.

34 Note that King (1980:39-40) referred to concentration meditation as a 'semiconcept' '...the meditator approaches these subjects intellectually... they are thought about rather than directly experienced. This sometimes inheres in the nature of the subject, such as buddha, Dhamma, benevolence, peace, and so on... The thought content may be visceralized by its induced emotional contextualizing; but even with this one-pointed thought-feeling and attention given to the subject, it is still thought-felt about and remains a semi-concept'.

35 KN suggested that it is feared that the life of the *weik-za* encourages adultery because it deals with the pleasures of the senses of those who can have so many beautiful girls in the heavens.

(see also Fig 7)

relatively favourably by government. Apart from people entering the country in the capacity of government diplomats, or aid officials, only WM allows foreigners to get into Burma for a period of more than the one week standard tourist visa. Indeed, I was allowed to visit any WM centre I chose, but not to visit areas famous for the practice of unorthodox concentration.³⁶ This would appear to be the reverse of the Thai government's attitude, as reported by Walter Irvine (1982) and Tambiah, where concentration meditation is regarded favourably, but some WM meditation teachers have been perceived as a risk to central government.³⁷

Finally, while the WM *yaw"gi* is not prescribed any special dress or appearance, except for the optional white or brown strip of cloth over the right shoulder (*law"bet tin thi*), the dedicated concentration practitioner is a person with a look apart: he grows a little beard, wears beads, wears rings with alchemic stones, has tatoos on his body, is preoccupied with images of the various deities such as *Tha-gya"Min* and *Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*, and will prescribe one or two supernatural remedies on request. Many, like (U") *Lei*", seek to use concentration to prescribe medicine with the goal of making a major charity to better their *pa-ra-mi*.

On the WM-concentration dispute

There is tension between exponents of WM and concentration meditation. This debate revolves around the issue of how much concentration one needs before WM can be successfully

36 (U") Nu' in Burma Pitaka Association (1985:119) included reference to the position on concentration by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw:
'The Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, in his long experience as a teacher of vipassana bhavana, has found that the yogis generally do well if they have to use the kayanupassana satipatthana out of the four satipathanas as their main bhavana. Therefore in his well-known treatise on the practice of the vipassana bhavana, the sayadaw has made the kayanupassana satipatthana the basis for the bhavana. From the kayanupassana, the sayadaw left out the samatha (non-vipassana) parts of the patikula manasikara and the sivathikas. Then he has reinforced the basis, namely, the kayanupassana, with steps from the twenty-one methods, that are considered suitable for the present day yogis. The Sayadaw feels happy to find that his treatise has benefited a very large number of yogis.'

37 This difference in attitude between Thailand and Burma is interesting and requires further investigation; it may be linked to the continued monarchy in Thailand to which the concentration meditation folklore is complementary.

attempted. For example, the Ma-ha-si's position on this was that one did not need to develop concentration to trance level, as this is a distraction to the achievement of cessation (*neik-ban*).³⁸ Some of his critics, on the other hand, maintain that one must achieve the 'trances' (*zan*) before even attempting WM. A critique became public over this issue during the Sixth Buddhist Thin-ga-ya'na between 1954-6, after the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw published *Lessons of practical basic exercises* in Sri Lanka (by Lanka Bauddha Mandalay) in 1955, emanating from both Sri Lanka and Burma itself.³⁸ Indeed, the standard argument among concentration meditators against the WM practitioner is that (though accepting that WM is the most noble meditational practice in Buddhism) the WM *yaw"gi* has hardly the concentration necessary to achieve his goals, and that to achieve them the *yaw"gi* requires first of all to succeed in concentration. After all, did not the Buddha first practice concentration meditation to achieve what he had achieved?

The WM *yaw"gi*, on the other hand, retorts that there were plenty of *ya-han"da* who achieved enlightenment without achieving any of the trances. They allege that most concentration meditators are apt to be preoccupied only with 'worldly', not 'otherworldly' aims. Concentration, so they argue, is 'worldly religion' (*law"ki tha-tha-na*) because it can not 'destroy permanently the defilements' (*ki'lei-tha ma pe bu*). Only WM can do this, which is 'otherworldly religion' (*law"kot-ta-ra tha-tha-na*). WM *yaw"gi* criticise concentration meditators' striving to become 'worldly sages' (*law"ki weik-za*).

WM *yaw"gi* sometimes deny the concentration meditator's Buddhist status by applying the label *gan-da-ri* to refer to the non-Buddhist nature of certain concentration practices, indicating its unorthodoxy as a hermit-practice prior to the advent of Buddhism, or simply as any exercise external and in no relation to Buddhism.³⁹ This 'external to Buddhism nature' of concentration

38 This debate was for the most part about whether concentration meditation was needed prior to WM or not. The Ma-ha-si's position in this debate was that, though 'momentary concentration' is developed as part of WM, any other type of concentration qualifies one as a concentration meditator as follows, 'One who primarily develops access absorption concentration is a samatha-yanika. One who proceeds directly with insight without having previously developed the said concentration is Vipassana-yanika.' (Ma-ha-si 1979:63).

The debate started when in 1957 the monks Kassapa Thera and Soma Thera from Vajirama, Colombo, Sri Lanka, who had received their ordination under the Pandeva Maha Thera of the Shwegyin Kyaung Taik in Moulmein, criticised the Ma-ha-si technique in a booklet published by Henry Herlis for wrongly teaching as if momentary concentration could be part of WM practice. In July 1966 the monk Kheminda, also from Vajirama, wrote another critique of the Ma-ha-si method in an article in the periodical *World Buddhism*. A defense of the Ma-ha-si position was published by the monk Nyanuttara (aided by Myanaung U Tin and Janakabhivamsa: U Zanaka) published in the same journal in two instalments. Kheminda replied in installments to this in the same magazine, which was in turn answered by Nyanuttara, again published in the same journal.

In Burma itself there were two critics of the Ma-ha-si method. The Syriam Tawya Hsa-ya-daw U Tilokanyana wrote a book in critique not only of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-yadaw but also the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. The Ma-ha-si wrote a reply. In 1977 Lama Govinda criticized the Ma-ha-si method in his book 'Creative Meditation and Multidimensional Consciousness' (see in part. Ch5). The Kheminda-Nyanuttara publications were all republished in *Satipatthana vipassana meditation: criticism and replies* (BTNA 1979b).

39 *Gan-da-ri* on the one hand is taken to mean 'belonging to Gandahara country', while on the other hand it is the name of 'the kind of knowledge which makes one's body disappear', being linked to *Gandhari-mandan*, the name of a magical charm (Digha 1.213)). See also Aw-ba-tha (1975:191).

is evident, for example, in the common reference to Uri Geller, the Israeli spoon-bender, as a concentration practitioner. Certainly the Indians with their yogic techniques are widely considered the most apt at concentration, much more so than the Burmese. WM, on the other hand, even by concentration meditators, is widely considered uniquely Buddhist; it is also considered very Burmese.

Temperaments run high in particular when emblems often carried around by concentration meditators, such as rosaries, are brought into WM centres, and when *yaw"gi* persist in their concentration methods while claiming to do WM. This was also a factor in the way (U") Lei" was expelled from the meditation centre.

On WM-WM tension

'Many roads lead up to the same mountain', as I was told by many WM *yaw"gi* with respect to the multitude of WM methods. Underneath it all, I was assured, WM is essentially uniform in purpose. Some methods may be 'slower', 'more painful', or 'more suitable to monks' than others, but they all lead up to the same intuitive realisation of suffering, impermanence, and non-self, and climb the same ladder to cessation (*neik-ban*).

But despite the attempt at universalising the aims of WM and the legitimacy of all Burmese methods, there is an undercurrent of critique and dispute between exponents of different WM methods who are, after all, competing for the same clientele. One major controversy is over concentration. So far it has been suggested that WM and concentration are opposed to each other, but they are also complementary in a way not explored so far.

First, as pointed out above, there is the idea that the one grew out of the other in macro-history. This is implicit in the Burmese view of things; in chapter 3 we looked at how the WM period gave way to the concentration period. But it is also implicit in the point of view of western students of comparative religions. King observed the difference between WM and concentration as a historical doctrinal problem contrasting WM, an ultra-Buddhist post-enlightenment technique aiming to terminate the process of rebirth and extinguish *karma* (*kan*), with concentration meditation, a prior-to-Buddhism technique borrowed from Vedic meditation techniques which aimed at the union with Brahma. He described the historically evolving tension between the two:

'What then is the relation of this yogic methodological inheritance, with its latent, but intrinsic Brahmanical presuppositions and values, to the Buddhist world view embodied in vipassana meditation? This relationship of rejection-acceptance, use-transcendence, and of fundamental qualification of the yogic inheritance by its Buddhist contextual setting and employment, is perhaps the central feature of the total meditational structure. It seems to me also to be a basic functional dynamic, a creative tension within the theory and practice of meditation that explains its distinctive character... I am concerned with unravelling and clarifying this inner pattern of interactive relationship' (1980:viii).

Second, and more important, WM is methodologically dependent on a foundation in concentration (*tha-ma-di*). In any WM method at least 'access concentration' must be achieved before 'crossing over'. This is usually a mild type of concentration which need not lead up as far as the achievement of even the first 'trance' (*zan*). Inspection of a teacher's book which recorded meditation experiences by students of one of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's *a-na-pa-na*' traditions, suggested that very different experiences were recorded during the first days of a course while developing concentration, when compared to subsequent days while practising WM. The *yaw"gi*, in their moments of concentration reported seeing images and entities such as mystical objects pagodas, hermits, lights, etc, but in the WM stages there was only reference to fleeting experiences of impermanence, such as prickling sensations, vibrations and so forth.

It is because of these continuities that tension arises among WM *yaw"gi* over the WM-concentration distinction. Some methods, in particular those in the Le-di *a-na-pa-na*' tradition (e.g. Mo'hnyin", Hsa-ya Thet-gyi", Ba' Hkin, etc), emphasise the cultivation of concentration as a separate activity using specifically concentration techniques before 'crossing over to WM'. Other 'bare insight' methods, such as those of the Min"gun" and his pupils (e.g. the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw), advocate the development of concentration in the context of specifically WM techniques without a discrete break between the two activities, and without using standard concentration techniques. Exponents of the Min"gun" method, self-conscious about the confusion already sketched above between WM and concentration meditators, avoid such terminology and refer to it as 'the way of mindfulness' (*tha-di'pa-htan*), the same name as the Buddha's sermon after enlightenment in which he preached about WM after he had rejected concentration.

This difference in technique thus introduces a new dimension to the WM/concentration debate: the critique directed at the concentration meditator has been imported into certain WM traditions, so that exponents of one WM method now stand in critique against another over concentration. One alleges the other includes too blatant an emphasis on concentration, while the other makes the point that without a strict initial period of concentration, WM takes too long and is more suitable for monks, who have all the time in the world, than for lay people. Meditation centres have split off from each other for various reasons, over the issue of 'charity' (e.g. the Goenka faction split off from the BK faction over whether people should pay a fee to meditate or whether the centre should operate on the basis of 'charity'), but also over the issue of concentration. The Ba Hkin and Ma-ha-si traditions initially cooperated in England, teaching in one centre, but one significant reason for their split included the Ma-ha-si's view that the BK method, along with the other Le-di *a-na-pa-na*' branched methods, overemphasised concentration. It is also clear that the Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw's methods, with an emphasis on

control, comes close to being a concentration technique which may have contributed to the confusion experienced by (U") Lei" about the two.⁴⁰

The WM-concentration debate is, like the scriptural learning-practice debate in chapter 3, a Russian doll phenomenon where each time one seeks to isolate practice or WM so as to understand it, one finds within it the scriptural learning-practice and concentration-WM meditation debates infinitely replicated. It is perhaps because of the important continuities between the two that the distinction becomes all the more important and emotive, as evidenced by Ma-ha-si's view of the situation (see quote at beginning of this chapter).

Conclusion

The terminology associated with meditation is complex⁴¹ and confusing with a proliferation of terms.⁴² Spiro (1970:48-9) summed up this confusion over meditation in a footnote:

'Although contemporary Buddhists talk a great deal about meditation, and although much has been written on the subject, it remains a confusing subject. Its basic concepts—even apart from their loose and ambiguous connotations—are used somewhat differently by different authors and informants...'

Spiro continued as follows: 'Clearly it is impossible for the anthropologist to adjudicate...In general, when these semantic differences cannot be reconciled, I tend to follow the usage of Nyanaponika and the Pali-English dictionary.' A good understanding of meditation was crucial to Spiro's work because it came into his framework at two important points. First, he held that contemporary Burmese Buddhists were less Nibbanic and more Kammatic oriented, by which he meant that they were less concerned with 'meditation' than with 'charity', and sought out less the direct cessation of life (*neik-ban*) than the perpetuation of rebirths through the accumulation of merit. Second, Spiro opposed Buddhism to the nat-cultus through the

40 That the Sun"lun" method is widely considered a border-line case between WM and concentration is evident from both King's and Mendelson's observations:

'Two questions remain. First, does the Sunlun method genuinely conform to the supposed vipassana pattern of *observation* (only) of the fluxing process that comprises the person—and by extension, the whole world—or is there here a *jhana-type control and production* of subjective phenomena by the rough breathing and held-breath technique? This is reminiscent of the techniques rejected by the Buddha ... And the answer is not absolutely clear, for the line between these two types of method seems indistinct in Sunlun (King 1980:143).'

'Among famous *gaing sayadaws* [*gaing' hsa-ya-daws*] who were widely respected in Burma while I was there, the following may be mentioned...the Webu Hsayadaw, thought by many to be a arahant (one who will not have to be reborn) and said to walk above the ground... and the famous and controversial meditation-master the Sunlun Hsayadaw, held by some to have become an arahant on visiting the Webu Hsayadaw.... (Mendelson 1975:144-5).

41 For example, Rahula (1978b:67) said:

'It is unfortunate that hardly any other section of the Buddha's teaching is so much misunderstood as 'meditation', both by Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The moment the word 'meditation' is mentioned, one thinks of an escape from the daily activities of life; assuming a particular posture, like a statue in some cave or cell in a monastery, in some remote place cut off from society; and musing on, or being absorbed in, some kind of mystic or mysterious thought or trance. True Buddhist 'meditation' does not mean this kind of escape at all. The Buddha's teaching on this subject was so wrongly, or so little understood, that in later times the way of 'meditation' deteriorated and degenerated into a kind of ritual or ceremony almost technical in its routine.'

42 See end-notes, 'Meditation terms'.

opposition between meditation and possession. Considering that a good understanding of meditation was crucial to Spiro's overall framework for Burmese Buddhism, it is somewhat surprising that he should take meditation to mean what Nyanaponika or the Pali-English dictionary mean by it; Nyanaponika is a German monk living in Sri Lanka, and the Pali-English dictionary had been compiled by two Englishmen.

What is clearly needed is to raise questions about this so-called 'confusion' of terms. First, what are the general semantic distinctions made about meditation by Burmese Buddhists? Second, when did these become apparent? Third, why are these semantic distinctions, while used by virtually all Burmese Buddhists, understood in such different ways?

Let me begin with the first question. This chapter has so far described the distinction between concentration and WM, the institutionalisation and purposes of which were perceived as having distinct characteristics, and which provided a stepping stone to many other issues such as the distinction between Buddhism vs non-Buddhism. If this was largely a debate among meditators, meditators were also in debate with non-meditators; with scholars of Buddhism the debate is about 'scholarship' vs 'practice'; in debate with ordinary laymen not interested in meditation it is about 'charity' or 'morality' vs 'meditation'.

At the beginning of this chapter I quoted the Ma-ha-si attributing confusion to Buddhists over the distinction between concentration and WM,⁴³ but there was a sequel to his utterance; he linked this confusion between WM and concentration meditation to the problem of language and concept:

Some speak of concentration meditation (*tha-ma-hta'*) believing it to be 'insight' meditation (*wi'pat-tha-na*). Some are of the opinion that true 'insight' is really concentration, and some are also saying that neither is efficacious. The 'insight' preached by some is but the 'sounding of texts', the work of those who cannot have learnt it from their own personal experience in meditation. This is why there are people who, while smarting with 'insight' meditation, are yet incapable of imparting it' (1981a:2)

Taken from the introduction to his *The foundation of WM*, this passage aimed to educate the Burmese public at large on the rights and wrongs of various approaches to the abstruse subject of WM. Put simply, it points out confusion among Buddhists about meditation, where the WM-concentration tension becomes part of a larger problem, namely the opposition between meditation as *experience*—'learnt it from their own personal experience'—vs. textually received *doctrine*—'nothing but the sounding of written texts'.

What did the Ma-ha-si mean by this? I interpret his statement as follows. Those who confuse WM with either concentration or with text are 'smarting with insight meditation', but are 'yet

43 This 'confusion' is also noted by Than Daing (1970:8), 'There may be thousands who could not differentiate between Samatha and Vipassana in the so-called Buddhist lands.'

incapable of imparting it' because WM transcends man's conventions of language and concept upon which both scriptural learning and concentration are based.

Having said that concentration meditation is to WM what scriptural learning is to practise, it should not be concluded that concentration is simple text and language; it is about the process of imaging in a general sense. We have noted how concentration meditators accept man-made imagery and language as they appear—visualisations, qualities, concepts, association, etc. Even WM *yaw"gi*, while developing their concentration necessary for WM practice, sense very strongly the entities of pagodas, hermits, etc. But once WM is attempted there is heightened awareness that these induced objects of meditation are subject to change and decay. Whereas concentration parrots and mimics, even strengthens, the knowledge of the world through the five senses (sight, hearing, sense, smell, taste), WM knowledge occurs when the fleeting process the Buddhist sixth sense, namely mind itself, is contemplated.

Having noted that the WM-concentration distinction overlaps with the scriptural learning-practice distinction, the second question is: when did this distinction become important? In chapter 1 it was noted how early western accounts dealt with meditation as if it was a linguistic act; I suggested that this could be interpreted as either ignorance of contemporary meditation in Burma (by the analogy of meditation with Christian prayer), or as an indication of how meditation was indeed perceived and explained this way by Burmese Buddhists at the time. Chapter 3 went on to suggest that the latter was more likely, because Burmese historians of practice themselves perceived how in Buddhist history people were ignorant of true practice and the experience of meditation, and that this history was dominated by text with the emphasis on scriptural learning. I then went on to suggest that the ideal of personal meditation experience defies language, yet is dependent upon language and text for its historical continuity.

That WM may have been 'confused with language' during the 19th century is suggested by Than-di'ma, who claimed to deal with WM techniques, yet whose methodology was language oriented,

'How does one meditate? Hair, toenail, fingernail, saliva (teeth water). (then in reverse) Water teeth, nailfinger, nailtoe, hair (continued by a long list of various parts of the body) ... These should be intoned by mouth over and over, a thousand times, in order and in reverse order..' (Than-di'ma 1883:70-71).

I now wish to suggest that the distinction between WM and concentration meditation—which has arisen with the higher public profile of WM methods over the last decades—has only recently been discovered in popular perception. The sense of discrimination between meditation activity in terms of two types was probably not as marked during the 19th century while meditation was still in the monastic domain, and meditation by the ordained was limited to recitation of verses and counting of beads. The popular term for WM today is to all intents and purposes a relatively

recent one. Prof. Hla Pe⁴⁴ noted that to his knowledge the terms 'apply oneself to the dhamma' (*ta-ya" a" htok thi*) and 'dhamma sitting' (*ta-ya" htaing thi*) were not the general term for meditation at the beginning of this century, but instead *ka-ma-htan"* and *ba-wa-na* were used; while the former 'new' terms are unambiguous with respect to WM or concentration, the latter are ambiguous, meaning either. This use of more specific terminology in popular usage would therefore suggest that the distinction has become an increasingly important one among meditators. This view of true meditation as WM, as both extra-sensory and ultra-experiential, I suggest, is a recent one which may have evolved only after text was conquered, and after its replication was relegated from monk-memory and monk-scribe to the modern printing press.

The third question is: why are there so many differences of opinion between Burmese Buddhists? The Ma-ha-si was not worried that people were not capable of distinguishing between WM and concentration; his worry was that they all made their own distinctions which interfered with what he saw as the correct one. The problem here is that, while everyone is being allowed to make the distinctions between WM and concentration in his or her own way, the terminology of meditation will always remain confusing. The question may therefore be rephrased; what is the foundation of freedom of choice with respect to meditation method? How could achievement of not inconsiderable knowledge and power be claimed?

These questions bear closely on the question of personal freedom of the individual in Theravada Southeast Asia, about which western scholarship on Southeast Asia is full of generalisations. Embree was one of the earliest social scientists to point this out through his 'loose structure' concept, which generated so much debate in the literature.⁴⁵ We find it commonly argued that there is as much emphasis on personal achievement as on ascribed rules of heredity; there is a lack of enduring circumscribed kingroups, individual choices of name with no family names and no change of name at marriage, unmarked graves at death for relatives, equal inheritance, equal access to the monastery, the 'roaming' of religionists, a lack of church or parish, and a highly individualised concern with salvation, etc. Many scholars pointed to the Buddhist value system as a determining factor in individual freedom (Ray 1946:265), in particular the concept of *kan*. For example, Nash (1963:293) held that 'Buddhism permits the Burman wide swings in his reactions to the world', which explains why in Burma there is 'no room for guilt, anxiety, remorse or worry'; that there are 'no perdurable associations'. Keyes (1977:164) held that 'The fact that in all Theravada Buddhist societies non-ascriptive criteria are

44 Personal communication.

45 For a brief overview of this debate see Keyes (1977:163-167).

at least as important as ascriptive criteria in the allocation of social roles can be explained, I believe, with reference to the Buddhist ideas that Karma [*kan*] not only determines one's place along the hierarchy of relative suffering but also that human beings create their own Karma.⁴⁶ The lack of institutional control over the individuals considered in part 1 of this chapter went hand in hand with a sense of open access to knowledge. Unordained individuals are not deterred from seeing themselves capable of accessing the heights of 'knowledge' and 'purity'. Meditation affords an avenue to knowledge of the highest kind, yet it is preached by the monks in the meditation centre to all and sundry, all of whom are in principle considered capable of success in achieving the highest stages of sainthood. In this manner, power and knowledge are conceived as a collective good based on personal achievement irrespective of status at birth.

When Hsa-ya Lei" suggested that good meditators have 'royal minds', she indicated this open avenue to nobility status: good meditation indicates good perfections, which qualifies one to claim high status. (U") Lei" claimed early rebirths in some remarkably high royal status roles. But such a claim requires affirmation, which in turn depends on the rapport between pupil and teacher and the status of the teacher in Burmese society. Here evidently patronage and status do play a role. Undoubtedly (U") Lei"'s relative wealth and influence made his quest more credible with many people, who came to visit him regularly for advice. As for unordained WM teachers, (U") Ba' Hkin's sanction to teach by the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw and Hsa-ya Thet Gyi" was undoubtedly also a reflection of his influential position in government. But none of our case studies received anything like the public recognition commonly given to any member of the monastic order as a matter of course: (U") Lei" was criticised by his wife and children, Hsa-ya-lei" was criticised and suffered from much opposition within the centre, and Ba'gyi"'s achievements, though at least acknowledged by his wife, did not go far beyond the confines of his household.

Therefore, a personal claim to success in meditation is not enforceable. While knowledge, purity and power are all in theory accessible, in practice such achievements are not recognised by the public unless one is part of the monastic order and shows evidence of exams and lineage membership as well as much admired personal qualities, such as generosity, morality, concentration, wisdom. The monastic order, with its high standards of scriptural learning and code of conduct—by incorporating the individual monk into a historical spiritual lineage of inheritance back to the Buddha—retains this public image of saintliness, knowledge, and power. The three case studies, though believing in their own capacities and powers, have no publicly endorsed means to teach: unlike ordained monks, they can neither publicly be part of the

46 Spiro (1970:433) characteristically reduced the problem to a psychological one when he wrote, 'it is not because of their belief in *karma* [*kan*], but because of a basic lack of concern for other people, a characterological disposition rather than a religiously motivated response'.

Buddha lineage nor publicly transmit it. Buddhism here, despite its many changes, remains an ideology of the *than-ga*.

So, therefore, while the individual *yaw"gi*—in the absence of institutional sanction—are quite free to understand WM and concentration on their own terms, they have little opportunity to disseminate these distinctions to others unless they join the monastic order. But then, even those famous monks able to disseminate knowledge, such as the Ma-ha-si, have no way of securely enforcing their distinctions. Moreover, the members from the monastic order—not having an overarching authority—are themselves divided over the WM-concentration issue.

Contemporary Burmese hagiography

The hagiographies of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw and U" Ba' Hkin

This chapter discusses two hagiographies drawn from the modern practice literature first discussed in chapter 3. The first hagiography concerns the 'monk hagiography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti'*) of the WM teacher Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, and the second a lay hagiography (*at-htok-pat-ti'*) of Accountant General and WM teacher (U") Ba' Hkin.¹

Apart from the influence of personal preference and the educational background of their authors, these works were guided in two important ways.

First, the hagiographies were shaped by conventions of Burmese hagiography. Few Burmese biographies have been translated into the English language, and the development of this genre has been somewhat ignored by in the West.² My arguments about the place of monk hagiography within Burmese biography as a whole help to place these two biographies into a historical context (see appendix F). In sum, according to a government inspired classification of biography, as represented by the published proceeds of a conference on the subject (Sa-bei Beik-man 1971), there is little or no place in modern biography for traditional monk hagiography because these are unchanging, legendary, and not true to reality, where all 'bad is drowned and only the good tends to be recounted'. I noted that the western classification for hagiography follows an 'author centered' approach, whereby the author and his/her methodology of writing are the criteria by which hagiography is classified, whereas traditional Burmese hagiography

1 I know of only one autobiography in the WM tradition, for which is used the same term *at-htok-pat-ti'*, namely (U") Myat Thein" Htun" *At-htok-pat-ti' Pok-ka-la' da-ma'di-pa-ni*, i.e. 'The Hagiography of (U") Myat Thein" Htun": a personal treatise on the *da-ma*'.

2 While there are no general assessments of the historical development and varieties of Burmese biographical literature available in the English medium, a few Burmese biographies have nevertheless been translated into English. Among the more notable ones are the following: the autobiography of (U") Nu' translated in English; the biography of Thein" Hpei Myin' (Dr Taylor); and in the *JBR* several biographical episodes are described.

was 'subject centered', classified according to whom it was about (as in the distinction between *at-htok-pat-ti*' for lay persons and *hte-rok-pat-ti*' for monks). The two hagiographies are in many ways modern. They were part of the global 20th Century trend in literature: from verse to prose, and from Pali/Pali-Burmese *neik-tha-ya*' to the vernacular. Since almost all early hagiography dealt either with kings and monks, the Ba' Hkin hagiography is furthermore part of the trend towards hagiographies of laymen. Both also used historical evidence about the lives fairly strictly. But there is a strong way in which they can both be seen as part of the old-style hagiography. The Burmese sense of hagiography (*at-htok-pat-ti*') can be used for to indicate variously 'facts', 'events', 'a statement of fact', and 'narration of events'. Also, it is not strictly limited to events pertaining to a human life (e.g. it could refer to events pertaining to an institution). This vagueness with respect to the Burmese term 'hagiography' may be linked to the lack of distinction between lineage and hagiography in the case of the Ba' Hkin hagiography.

I will now give a brief overview of the lives of the two meditation teachers.

Second, as the hagiographies were published in 1979 and 1980 respectively, these were subject to the 5 July 1975 Censor's Eleven Guidelines, of which two are likely to have influenced the final texts significantly, namely: (i) elimination of 'any incorrect ideas and opinions which do not accord with the times', and (ii) elimination of 'any descriptions which, though factually correct, are unsuitable because of the time or the circumstances of writing'.³ These two points in the Censor's guidelines are so unspecific that we do not know how the authors adapted their writing to meet them, or in what ways their initial drafts were actually censored.⁴

Hagiography of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (U" Thaw"ba-na')

The hagiography considered here is the largest of four different part-life hagiographies of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (1904-1982),⁵ the 'bare insight' master who taught in the Lower Burma *tha-di'pa-htan* tradition of the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw, and whose chief meditation centre, Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha, was discussed in chapter 5. The Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw is referred to under three further names before he was finally known as the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw: his lay name was (Maung) Thwin, after his ordination his 'title' was (U") Thaw"ba-na', and upon becoming abbot of the monastery he was known as the Taung-waing"ga-lei" Hsa-ya-daw.

3 A. Allott, 1987 ASEAS UK Lecture notes on the short story.

4 A different edition (though substantially the same in content and structure) of the Ma-ha-si hagiography had been published in 1974, the year before the guidelines were introduced, but the guidelines may have already been in force at that time.

5 See end-notes, 'Ma-ha-si hagiographies'.

There are three versions of this particular hagiography: it was initially published in 1974 as one chapter of a string of hagiographies in a large volume entitled *History of Practice* (Ma-ha-si Pa-di'pat-ti' Tha-tha-na-win); it was subsequently reissued as separate hagiography in 1979; and it was finally translated into English in 1982.⁶

The significance of this hagiography is conveyed in the preface to it by (Ma-so"yein U") Teik-tha, who said: 'It is because of the Hsa-ya-daw's qualities of morality, concentration and knowledge, and his very astute competence, that we find that at present the rays of practice, which have been so dim in Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*), are brought to a shining illuminating brilliance, all to the greatest joy of Buddhists in our present era.' Also, with reference to earlier teachers: 'though they exerted and applied themselves like silent Buddhas (*pyit-sei-ka' bok-da*) diligently for themselves, among them not one could have carried his grace out around the world to other Buddhists as much as has the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw.' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:v-vi)

The hagiographer

(A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da, the hagiographer, was referred to in full as the (A-ba'ya-ra-ma'daik Da-ma Sa-ri'ya' Ba-than-da-ra' Kaw"wi'da' Hsa-ya-daw A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da (Bi'wun-tha'), meaning that he lived in the A-ba'ya-ra-ma' monastery (located in the west Mandalay Sein-ban quarter), had the Da-ma Sa-ri'ya' title, is a renowned linguist, and has passed the *a-bi'da-ma* exams. It is described in the preface how Thi-la-nan-da was positively sought out as the hagiographer-to-be by his hagiographical subject. In brief, the reasons for Ma-ha-si's firm choice

⁶ It should be noted that I did not initially have access to the English translation (Thi-la-nan-da 1982), and that I base the summary mainly on the earlier Burmese version (Thi-la-nan-da 1979).

of his own hagiographer were: Thi-la-nan-da's literary achievement,⁷ his scholarly skills,⁸ and his lineage.⁹

(U") Teik-tha went in person to Thi-la-nan-da's monastery in order to explain that he was the best person to write his hagiography for inclusion in the *Ma-ha-si Pa-di'pat-ti' Tha-tha-na-win*. After initial refusal, Thi-la-nan-da eventually gave in after pressure (Thi-la-nan-da 1982:xi).

Structure of the hagiography

The hagiography's structure follows the Ma-ha-si's life chronologically, and may be divided for convenience into 10 different sections: his early life as a novice (pp1-10), his early life as a monk (pp11-17), his practice of meditation (pp18-30), his teaching of meditation (pp31-43), his writing on meditation (pp43-60), his connection with Rangoon (pp61-72), his involvement in the Sixth Synod (pp73-87), his travels abroad (pp88-141), his writings and an epilogue (pp142-190).

All we need to note here is that a substantial part of the Ma-ha-si's life-story deals with his scholarship (approx. one-third) and his foreign travel (approx. one-third). The importance of these two—scholarship, and the role of the foreigner/Burma's image abroad—is shared to some extent with the Ba' Hkin hagiography, and this will be taken up in the conclusion to this chapter. The following section will focus mainly on those parts dealing more directly with the Ma-ha-si's life.

Ma-ha-si's life summarised

The Ma-ha-si was born on 29 July 1904 in Hseit-hkun Ywa, 7 miles to the west of Shwei-bo. His parents, (U") Kan Baw and (Daw) Ok were born in the same village, and worked enough land

7 The Ma-ha-si's most important reason for selecting his hagiographer was his skill in writing (as indeed evident from the hagiography's readability). It is described in the preface how in 1970 (1332 nat-daw-la), the day after the 21st Ma-ha-si instruction festival, the monks went to pay their respects to the Ma-ha-si with the intention of returning to their monasteries. The Ma-ha-si asked whether (U") Teik-tha (author of the preface) had received the new edition of *Mauk-ga-lan Neik-tha-ya'*. When (U") Teik-tha replied that he had not, the Ma-ha-si handed him a copy, noting how good the edited corrections by (A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da (the author of the Ma-ha-si hagiography) were in the preface to the book. When (U") Teik-tha read it, not only did he find that (A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da had indeed interpreted the work of prior scholars very competently, but Thi-la-nan-da's manner of writing showed four major qualities: he was consistent in sentence construction, his writing was thorough and well structured, he was capable of bringing to the surface submerged points of meaning not discernable to others, and, being a linguist, he was skilful in the use of tense, subject and object, so that the reader could not be lost (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:xii-xiii).

8 The second reason why the Ma-ha-si chose his hagiographer was Thi-la-nan-da's scholarly erudition. This had been evident to the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw in Thi-la-nan-da's foreword to the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'* Pali-Burmese dictionary where skilful use was made of the Asoka pillar and rock inscriptions, the Pali scriptures, the Commentaries, the *ti-ka* Texts, and the Sanskrit and Burmese stone inscriptions. Thi-la-nan-da's early familiarity with the Ma-ha-si in the world of scholarship helped in the choice of hagiographer. Though Thi-la-nan-da was not on the Organising Committee of the Sixth Buddhist Synod, his scholarly erudition had led him into contact with the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw with whom he consulted over the Pali-Burmese dictionary. Hence: 'In particular, as he had worked together very closely with the Venerable Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw who was holding a highly responsible top-post on the occasion of the Sixth Buddhist Council, it was imagined that there could not be any other person except Ashin Silanandabhivamsa who [could] know more about the "facts of life" of the Venerable Mahasi Hsayadaw.' (Thi-la-nan-da 1982:xi)

9 The relationship between the Ma-ha-si and Thi-la-nan-da becomes clearer in the hagiography itself, where we learn of a shared lineage together. See endnotes, 'Ma-ha-si vs Thi-la-nan-da'.

for a pair of bullocks, i.e. about 12 acres. The Ma-ha-si was born as son number two of seven children; four boys and three girls. The children were named in rhyme with the syllable *in*: (U") Tin, (U") Hkin, (U") Hmin, (U") Ba' Yin, (Daw) Thin, as was the Ma-ha-si-to-be, who was named (U") Thwin.

What is really surprising is that the name of the Hsa-ya-daw when he was a boy happened to be identical with the name of the wealthy gentleman who, out of great reverence, would later entrust the Hsa-ya-daw with the ecclesiastical administration of the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha. One might hold it to be a coincidence. However, no one is likely to deny that the very name given is but an early omen of what the future will hold' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:8)

At the age of 6 he became a student at the Pyin"ma-na" Kyaung", the local monastery in Hseit-hkun Village, under the authority of (U") A-deik-sa'. At the age of 12 he was ordained a novice under the same teacher from his youth, who gave him the 'title' Shin Thaw"ba-na', meaning 'beauty'.

In the monastery he first learnt the 10 Buddha birth-stories (*zat*). As his teacher considered him to be of exceptional intelligence, he was soon taught the Monastic Disciplinary Code (*wi'ni*") and the Commentaries (*a-hta'ka-hta*), without any foundation in grammar. Only afterwards did he learn grammar (*tha-da*) and the short *A-bi'da-ma* philosophy (*thin-gyo*). Contrary to normal practice of delaying the study of Pali-Burmese mixed text (*neik-tha-ya'*) for fear of inducing slackness, Thaw"ba-na' was allowed to study this straight away. He studied complex grammars. He could memorise all of them by heart, including the sub-commentaries (*ti-ka*). Within a month he had mastered the big book of arithmetic without any help and by combining his natural wisdom and talent with his untiring efforts he also managed to attain a higher knowledge of the scriptures. Thaw"ba-na' soon moved to study with a monk named (U") Pa-ra-ma' at the Thu-gyi" Monastery in the In-gyin"taw"daik, located northwest from Ma-ha-si's village of birth, where he continued his scriptural learning until the age of 19, studying works which fully ordained monks do not normally even attempt.

At the age of 19, the time had arrived in the life of Thaw"ba-na' for a crucially important decision: was he to return to 'human' society (*lu baung*) and earn a living, or was he to continue in the society of monks (*tha-tha-na' baung*) and be ordained a monk? He was ordained as a monk at the age of 19 years and 4 months on 7 November 1922 at the ordination hall of the In-gyin"taw" monastery. His preceptors (*u'pyit-ze hsa-ya-daw*) were Thu'mei-da Hsa-ya-daw (who was head of the Ma-ha-bo sect) from the village Htan"zin (near Hseit-hkun Village), and Nein-ma-la'. They were assisted by (Hsa-ya-daw U") Pa-ra-ma' from Thu-gyi" monastery and 35 other *ka-ma-wa* monks. His uncle (U") Aung Baw and aunt (Daw) Thit were his sponsors (*ya-han" da-ga*).

After ordination, Thaw"ba-na' devoted his time to 'scriptural learning' with (U") Pa-ra-ma' from Thu-gyi" monastery. In 1924 he successfully passed the government's First Certificate, and in 1927, after a period of travel, he sat the Advanced Certificate. With no exams left to do, in 1928

he left for Mandalay to study with famous learned monks, ending up in the Hpwa"daw Monastery in A-nauk-pyin Hkin-ma'gan-daik, West Mandalay, under the (Chan"tha-gyi" Hsa-ya-daw U") Lek-hka-na'. While staying in Mandalay, Thaw"ba-na' received a letter from the Hsa-ya-daw of the Moulmein Taung-wain"ga-lei" monastery. Having learnt of Thaw"ba-na's intelligence, and sharing the same village of birth, the Hsa-ya-daw asked him to come to Taung-wain"ga-lei" to help him teach his students. Thaw"ba-na' went in 1929 to Taung-waing-ga-lei", 2 miles east of Moulmein, where he stayed until 1931 to study and help propagate scriptural learning (*pa-ri'yat-ti' tha-tha-na*). Thaw"ba-na' took a particular interest in the *Tha-di'ya-htan thok*; he was born in a region famed for practice with the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw to whom King Min"don" had dedicated a forest monastery, and the Ma-ha-bo Hsa-ya-daw, but he also descended himself from the Ma-ha-bo Hsa-ya-daw,

That is why it was impossible for Shin Thaw"ba-na'—whose region, whose environment, whose teacher lineage were so strong—not to be inclined to 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*). (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:20)

The Ma-ha-si searched for the teachings of the early masters, but as they had not been recorded, they were difficult to find. However, he had heard of the famous Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw in Tha-hton Myo', a lineal descendant from the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw. On 31 December 1931, Thaw"ba-na' left to study with him, getting only reluctant permission from the Taung-waing-ga-lei" Hsa-ya-daw. After 4 months in meditation the Taung-waing"ga-lei" Hsa-ya-daw fell ill, and Thaw"ba-na' disrupted his practice to return to the monastery, where the Hsa-ya-daw died soon after. Thaw"ba-na' was successor but, needing 10 rainy seasons, and having only 8 so far, he had to wait until 1933 when he could succeed. Thaw"ba-na' continued his meditation as much possible, but as his was a 'scriptural learning' monastery he had little opportunity to teach practice.

In 1938 he went back to Hseit-hkun village, his village of birth, where he preached and taught meditation very successfully, first to his cousins, and later to other villagers. On his return to Taung-waing"ga-lei", the A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw had established himself in a new monastery nearby, and Thaw"ba-na' spent much time studying texts with him.

In 1941, Thaw"ba-na' passed recently introduced higher level exams, for which he received the title *Tha-tha-na'da-za' Thi-ri'pa-wa-ra' Da-ma-sa-ri'ya'*. War disrupted life at the monastery so closely located to an airport, and the monastery was evacuated, with the Ma-ha-si moving back to Hseit-hkun village. With his pupils increasing in number, he decided to write 'The method of WM' for their benefit. As more and more people learnt about his teachings, they got to know him as 'the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw' after the name of the monastery in which he lived; this was an embarrassment as, being only a temporary meditation teacher at the monastery, he

was not the chief monk. He also set up the Society for the Promotion of Tha-da'pa-la' Wi'pat-tha-na.

Soon after the war, and after necessary repairs to the monastery were finished, the Ma-ha-si returned to Taung-waing"ga-lei". But he frequently travelled between his monastery and Hseit-hkun Village, where he appointed two laymen as his first assistant teachers, namely (Hsa-ya) Kyan and (Hsa-ya) Kywet. On his frequent trips he once visited the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha project in Rangoon, which had been set up by the recently formed (on 13 Nov 1947) Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe' (BTNA), in which (Sir U") Thwin and Prime Minister U" Nu' played a major role. Sir U" Thwin had investigated which meditation teacher he could best install in the centre, and he invited Ma-ha-si to preach on 3 August 1947 at the Assembly Hall of the Tha-meik-daw"da-ya' Chaung nunnery. After close observation of the Ma-ha-si's qualities—his bodily posture, mannerisms, physical completeness and physical structure—he decided, 'the teacher I have been looking for is this monk'. The Ma-ha-si taught 300 people for five days at this nunnery. In November 1949 the Ma-ha-si was invited by Prime Minister U" Nu' to preach in Rangoon after preaching in Mandalay and Sa-gaing". He then started to teach meditation at the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha in Rangoon, which became his main place of residence. Not being able to cope with the number of students, teachings came to be recorded on tape from July/August 1951 onwards. Students went back to their villages and set up their own centres, so that before long there were hundreds of thousands of *yaw"gi* in Burma and hundreds of centres. In recognition of his teaching success, the Ma-ha-si received the Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-di'ta' title in 1952.

The Sixth Buddhist Synod (*Hsat-hta' Than-ga-ya'na'*), to purify the scriptures, included the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw who was in charge of editing and printing the *Ti'pi'ta-ka'*, and was questioner at the ceremony. In all he was involved in editing 117 texts or 40,000 pages. His father died during the questioning of the commentaries, and he had to interrupt his role in the proceedings to return to Hseit-hkun village to arrange the burial. He travelled in the course of organising the Synod to Thailand and Cambodia, and afterwards also to Japan upon the invitation of Japanese Theravada Buddhists.

As part of an increased international awareness of practice, in which Burma had been instrumental both during and before the Synod, Sri Lanka invited a meditation teacher from Burma. Prime Minister (U") Nu' 'respectfully entreated' the Ma-ha-si to go. But as the Ma-ha-si was deeply involved in the Synod he could not go, and he sent three of his pupils instead—(A-shin) Thu'za-da', (A-shin) Ok-ta-ra-bi'wun-tha', and (A-shin) Za-wa-na'—who arrived in Colombo on 29 July 1955. In Sri Lanka the *tha-di'pa-han* method had practically disappeared, and there were no meditation centres where *yaw"gi* could be systematically taught.

That is why they were very happy to have Burmese monks teaching *tha-di'pa-htan ka-ma-htan*" in practice. During the stay of the Burmese delegation, which exceeded a year, 12 permanent and 17 part-time meditation centres were opened in various parts of Sri Lanka. In 1958, the Ma-ha-si, Thu'za-da' and another monk received an invitation to open the new meditation centre built by the Lanka Vipassana Propagation Society, and they left for Sri Lanka on 6 Jan 1959. But they took a lengthy detour via India with a number of other monks and lay helpers. The Ma-ha-si, who had visited India once before, this time visited Calcutta and Budhagaya, where he made a tour of all the sacred sites in the area, and New Delhi. In New Delhi the Ma-ha-si had an interview with Prime Minister Nehru.¹⁰ He also visited Sanchi, Bombay, and Madras. One of the biggest problems faced by this Burmese party of monks were the high caste Indians who were badly behaved. The Ma-ha-si had throughout his journey through India close contact with the untouchables, many of whom had become Theravada Buddhists under the leadership of Ambedkar. The party had a train carriage for themselves, and the upper caste station masters had on purpose delayed the party on three occasions by attaching them to the wrong locomotive, just to hinder them. They left for Sri Lanka by air on 29 Jan 1959, going straight to the new McCarthy Centre, Ma-ha-si's main meditation centre in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Bandaranaike gave a speech at the opening ceremony. The Ma-ha-si departed to Burma by boat on 6 March 1959, leaving behind his meditation teachers (A-shin) Thu'za-da', (A-shin) A-law"ka', and (A-shin) Pan-di'ta'. On departure, the Ma-ha-si sent loving-kindness (*myit-ta*) to the Sri Lankans, and to Ms Nissania and the members of the Lanka Vipassana Association, and prayed for the success of the *hsa-ya-daws* remaining behind to disseminate WM in Sri Lanka.

Before the Ma-ha-si came it [WM] had practically disappeared in Sri Lanka, and there were next to no *wi'pat-tha-na* meditation teachers.... It was to be an invaluable *da-ma'* gift and now there are more than 10,000 Ma-ha-si pupils in Sri Lanka. Without the Ma-ha-si, like A-shin Ma-hein-da', no historical record of the Theravada *tha-tha-na* is complete, and no history of the *wi'pat-tha-na* in Sri Lanka is complete (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:172).

Many wanted to donate the Ma-ha-si a monastery, but he did not move until December 1968. As the Ma-ha-si got older, his health deteriorated: in 1969 he went to Mei-myo' to be operated on a cataract and he reduced his reading of things like newspapers. The hagiography takes his life up to 1973, but Ma-ha-si demised in August 1982, a few days after I left Burma for England.

10 This Nehru interview was reproduced in full in the hagiography.

Ba' Hkin

The only full-life hagiography of (U") Ba' Hkin (1898-1971) available is entitled *The hagiography and the missionary works of Burma's Honourable Special Great Teacher, U" Ba' Hkin*.¹¹ This hagiography is of interest for several reasons.

(U") Ba' Hkin's (abbrev. to BK) fame developed very differently from that of the Ma-ha-si; if the Ma-ha-si had his entire career in 'religion' (*tha-tha-na*) from childhood, BK was one of very few lay meditation teachers whose capabilities in Buddhism blossomed late in life, but whose fame as an important civil servant preceded him. The hagiography portrays a dual career: a secular career leading up from the post of clerk at the Office of the Accountant-General in November 1917 to the post of Accountant-General of Burma at National Independence in 1948; and a religious career, leading from a budding interest in WM on 8 January 1937 to becoming a meditation teacher in the *a-na-pa-na'* meditation tradition of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw during his visit to the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw in July 1941, and, finally, opening up a meditation centre of his own—the International Meditation Centre of his own on 9 November 1952. Though the hagiography gives us insight into the career of one of very few ethnic Burmese in the Indian civil service at a time when it was predominantly run by Indians, the purpose of the hagiography is to portray BK as a Buddhist, as conveyed in the preface by (Hsa-ya) Thu'hka';

This book is not a *da-ma'* work in the sense of a collection of discourses. But this is a hagiography in the sense of a collection of events pertaining to a person's practical findings, who was successful in practice according to the discourse exercises, and in teaching his pupils... (Hsa-ya-gyi" U") Ba' Hkin must be considered a big master of perfection (*pa-ra-mi shin*) who succeeded in the propagation of Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*) in an unusual way. Without having been to preach around the world, nevertheless his pupils enjoy his teachings all over the world. Meditation centres have appeared in many countries in Asia and Europe—England, America, Canada, New Zealand, Australia (p i).

The hagiography was published in 1980, nine years after BK's death. It is highly documented, in that it is based on interviews with BK on reminiscences by the hagiographer (U") Ko Lei" (abbrev. to KL) of him, letters and publications from pupils (mainly foreigners), and publications and broadcasts by BK on Buddhism. Small fractions appear to have been taken from a diary BK kept (pp98-9,319).¹² We also learn that BK kept a diary record of meritorious action (pp219-20).

11 *Myan-ma'gon-zaung-pak-ko-htu" Hsa-ya-gyi" U" Ba' Hkin At-htok-pat-ti' hnin' Tha-tha-na-pyu' lok-ngan"mya"*.

12 It was said that, 'Hsa-ya-gyi' was a person who was in the habit of keeping a daily record.' An extract of this diary was reproduced in the hagiography, in which Ba' Hkin recorded his merit under three different categories: charity merit (measured in money), morality merit (measured in *wi'ni*" rules), and meditation merit (daily meditation, which verses were recited and when) (KL 1980:119-121).

The hagiographer

KL, the hagiographer, is the retired Vice Chancellor of Mandalay University, and pupil of BK. KL had published work on BK prior to writing this hagiography.¹³ Unlike the hagiographer of the Ma-ha-si, however, who had no personal urge to write, KL said 'As for my desire to write this book, it is not because anyone urged me to do so, but it was my own wish...' (p xiv). He had wanted to write BK's hagiography ever since he became associated with him in 1960. Although KL started the hagiography in 1963, because BK did not want to have it published until after his death (p9,66,160), and some research still had to be completed, it did not get published until 1980. Most of KL's research was performed between 1963 and 1970 (p67). He finished writing the preface and chapters 1-4 in 1970, and the remaining 8 chapters in May 1979 (p xiv).

KL included a great deal of information about himself in the book (e.g. his relation to the hagiography in the introduction, his relationship to BK in chapter 6, his relation to Hsa-ya-ma' 460-61, etc). Unlike the Ma-ha-si's hagiographer, who did not introduce himself into the picture at all, KL gave great prominence to his relationship with BK: references are scattered throughout the hagiography, but there is a summary in the preface, and chapter 6, entitled 'Big Teacher and I' (pp 245-321), is a complete account of the relationship. The earliest and most tenuous link between the hagiographer and his subject is that KL (together with five other graduates from Rangoon University), was invited in 1934 to join the Office of the Accountant General in order to provide a Burmese element in an office monopolised by Indians. Indians at that time provided the labour in the office from floor sweepers and night watchmen to the highest in command, and there were only three Burmese in service—BK, then a deputy office supervisor in one of the office branches, was one of these three. When KL joined he was so badly treated by the Indians, that soon afterwards he left the job for better opportunities elsewhere in government, as did four other graduates (p68-9). BK, on the other hand, had been there before, and proceeded with his career despite the treatment he received from the Indians.

KL had only met BK very briefly during this early episode. In chapter 6, we learn that KL had hitherto never known or respected BK for his religious virtues. But this changed when KL was introduced to him by a foreigner.¹⁴ Although KL's aunt and uncle had been trying to get him to meditate at BK's International Meditation Centre (IMC) for a few years (pp2-3), he took an interest in meditation in 1960 after reading an essay given to him by his aunt and uncle called

13 Ko Lei" received the Sa-bei Beik-man prize for some of his written work on 24 October 1970 (p72,423). The Ba' Hkin hagiography was the second book by Ko Lei" in the publication series *Myat-bok-da' sa-zin* under his pen-name (U") Zei-ya Maung. His first was entitled *Myat Bok-da'dei-tha-na*. Zei-ya Maung wrote many other publications on Ba' Hkin (Zei-ya Maung 1971a, 1971b, 1973, 1975).

14 The role of the foreigner in introducing the hagiographer to his hagiographical subject was explained also in the preface.

Introduction to the International Meditation Centre, written in English by Elizabeth Nottingham, an American professor in sociology. Here BK's IMC is described, and KL was so impressed with it that he decided to meditate there (p261-2). He said 'I very much longed to experience myself the experience explained in Dr. Nottingham's book' (p266). So when KL, who lived in Mandalay and later upon retirement in Mei-myo', had the occasion to visit relatives in Rangoon in May 1960, he popped into the centre.¹⁵ However, it was not until 22 December 1960 that he entered the IMC with the intention of meditating a 10 day session (p267).¹⁶ But he stayed on to meditate for over 3 months until the last week of March 1961 (p290-1,3-4). After a brief respite in Mandalay KL returned to the centre in April the same year with several members of his family (wife, daughter, elder sister, 2 nephews) to meditate in time for the Burmese new year (p291). Ever since then he returned to the Centre regularly, about once or twice a year (p293). In June 1965 KL and BK ordained together into monkhood at the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw's for 12 days. The Wei-bu gave KL the monk-title (U") Tei-zein-da', and BK the title (U") Ku'tha-la' (p305). KL became a true disciple of BK over time, describing BK as resembling his father (demised in 1946) in stature, appearance, manner of walking, and manner of talking (p294).

Structure of the hagiography

KL struggles to cram as many facts between two covers as he possibly can, and his hagiography's 614 pages make it three-and-a-half times the size of the Ma-ha-si hagiography.¹⁷ Admittedly this covers an entire life, unlike the Ma-ha-si hagiography which is a part-life hagiography. But this is not the only reason for its extended length: it is intended, as claimed by its author, as a 'mile pole in history'. The division into chapters with numbered subheadings instead of the simple division of running headings in the Ma-ha-si hagiography, and its many appendices and an extensive bibliography, are evidence both of the author's conviction that BK was a man of historical significance, and of the author's background in academia. It is this urge to put on record all BK's achievements exhaustively and in a scholarly manner that would appear to be responsible for the hagiography's length and complexity.

15 KL had first practised meditation at the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw, during his 9-day temporary monkhood starting 9 April 1960, 2 days before the Burmese new year (pp251-261). Then he meditated for a month in Sept 1960 the Ma-ha-si method with the Pan-di'ta' Shwei-zei-di-daw Hsa-ya-daw at the Maung-daung'daik, East of Mandalay. He had been introduced to this centre by the nun Tha-meik-daw'da-ya'chaung Hsa-ya-gyi" (p266), the same nun who meditated the Ma-ha-si method at the time he first taught a public of 300 including (Sir U") Thwin.

16 Elsewhere (p66) we learn that when KL first meditated at BK's, BK was already retired from his work as Accountant General, yet he was still Head of the Dept of Merchandize of Crops, Head of Traffic Auditors, and Head of the Accountancy School. His income was 1600 kyats then.

17 The Ma-ha-si is 29 lines x 40 key strokes x 190 pages = 220400 characters, whereas the BK hagiography is 32 lines x 40 chars x 612 pages = 783360 characters.

As much as two-thirds of the Ba' Hkin hagiography deals with his correspondence with foreigners and their lives, but the following section will concentrate mainly on summarising those episodes important to our understanding of BK's life.

Ba' Hkin's life summarised

BK was a true Rangoonite. The son of (U") Paw", a broker¹⁸, and (Daw) Saw" Mei, he was born in 1898 in the Byon-cho neighbourhood, upper Ba-zun-daung, Rangoon. His education began with traditional monastic training in a local monastery till the age of 8 years old (1907). After receiving his monastic education he went to a Methodist school, where he stayed until the 7th standard (1907-1914). 'Ever since young, he was of exceptional intelligence, and without fail first in every class.' At the end of the 7th standard he was awarded a government scholarship and went to St. Pauls, also in Rangoon, for his education up to 10th standard, which was a college of excellent reputation. Here too he was always top of the class, as explained by (Pyin-nya Min"gyi"haung" U") Hpo" Thon, one of his class mates. BK passed 10th standard with a scholarship award in March 1917.

Although BK passed his 10th standard with flying colours and was awarded a scholarship at completion. He did not go on to further education. With both parents deceased by then he had no one to encourage him. He decided to go his own way. His first job was to work at *The Sun* (*Thu-ri'ya*) newspaper, one of the very first Burmese language nationalist newspapers set up by some of the founders of the YMBA movement. By November 1917 he had become a low grade clerk (*auk-tan"sa-yei*) at the office of the Accountant General; from this he was eventually to the highest as Accountant General.

At the time, there were many Indians working at the offices of the Accountant General and the Railways. In November 1926, having passed the Indian Government Accountancy exams, he was promoted to assistant office supervisor (*yon"wun-dauk*). The Accountant's office, like the Railways' office, employed almost no Burmese, which is why they were referred to as the 'Indian Offices', where only Indians worked and all the jobs were given to their relatives. At the time there were only three Burmese people working in the office, including: (U") San Lwin, the Assistant Accountant General (IAAS from India), who was later to become Accountant General and State Auditor¹⁹; BK, then assistant office manager²⁰ at a branch; and (U") Ba' Chit, ordinary clerk.²¹ The employment situation for the Burmese in these offices was complained about in the newspapers in 1934. Most Burmese employed at this office had run away because of oppression

18 We do not know what kind of broker his father was.

19 *Myan-ma Naing-ngan-daw Sa-yin"sit-gyok*.

20 *Yon"wun-dauk*.

21 *Tha-man sa-yei*."

by the Indians, including the six highly-educated Burmese brought in especially by the Accountant General to turn the 'Indian Office' into a 'Burmese Office'. Only Ba' Hkin stayed on. The Indians bantered with them saying, 'You Burmese do not know how to add up as much as four figures'. BK was held up by some Burmese as an example of how a Burmese could get on after passing the exams. Though he had enjoyed no university education he had, despite the bad working environment, managed to progress from an ordinary clerk to a deputy supervisor within nine years—he had much courage. BK had been deeply committed to studying for the accountancy exams, though the study material would have been boring to most people. He had such a good memory that he could recite the thick accountancy books from back to front. In 1937, Burma was to have a separate Accountancy Department from India, and on 1 April 1937 BK became a Special Supervisor (*a-htu"yon"won-dauk*) at the Office of the Auditor General (*Sa-yin"sit-gyok-yon"*). On 28 February 1941 he was promoted to Accountant Officer (*Ngwei-sa-yin'kain A-ya-shi'*) of the Railways' Board (*Mi"ya-hta"ok-chok-yei" A-hpwe'*).

BK was also a writer. Taking a great interest in Burmese literature (presumably inspired by his early work in journalism), he wrote quite a few novels and articles under the name of Hkin Shwei Cho (Hkin from his name, and Shwei Cho from a place where he used to live). These he sold to publishers near Thein-gyi" Market for which he received at most 25 kyats.

Although already studying the *a-bi'da-ma* in Bassein in 1931²², and helping to organise a visit by the Mo"hnyin" Hsa-ya-daw to Rangoon in 1934, it was not until his 40s, from 1937-8 onwards, that Ba' Hkin took a serious interest in Buddhism. As KL put it, 'at that time Big Teacher changed from pursuit of ordinary literature to literature on the Buddha's preachings' (p76). He became particularly interested in Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's works, who was very popular. Also popular at the time were the various Buddhist associations such as the various Dawn Merit Associations (*a-yon a-thin"*) and Religious Duty Recitation Societies (*wut yut a-thin"*), and BK became a member of an *a-bi'da-ma* discussion group²³ at Su-le Pagoda, discussing with men such as (Hsa-ya Gyi" U") Hpo" Hlaing, (U") Ta, and (U") Aung. 'In this manner, Big Teacher already carried out his various duties in the Three Jewels to the Bok-da' and the *Than-ga* as a fully fledged respectful Buddhist (*bok-da'ba-tha ta-u"*)' (p76).²⁴ Even during his travel for work he faithfully carried out religious works. BK started practising 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-hta'*) on 1 January 1937 (p591). But he did not meditate seriously until 8 January 1937, when he meditated 7 days with (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi".²⁵

22 See p591 of the hagiography.

23 *A-bi'da-ma pyan'pwa"yei" A-thin"*.

24 *Bok-da' wei-ya-wut-sa'* and *Than-ga' wei-ya-wut-sa'*.

25 It should be noted that BK's leave for meditation was taken three months before the accountancy office separated from India; was this a coincidence?

BK started his meditation without planning it. At the end of December 1936 he went with a relative on a sabbath day to the house of (U") Ei Maung, a Burmese school teacher. (U") Ei Maung explained that he kept no ordinary sabbath, but 10-day meditation retreats in Da-la'byaw-bwe-gyi" Village. BK wanted to know about this meditation. On 1 Jan 1937 (U") Ei Maung taught the curious (U") Ba' Hkin, and found out that he had such good concentration that he could play with imaginary light in front of his mind's eye in any way he wanted to.

BK practised *a-na-pa-na'* at home by himself. The same signs occurred, and he realised that he must go to Da-la'byaw-bwe-gyi" Village to learn the method from (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" himself. He went on 8 January 1937, after getting permission from work. When he arrived after an arduous journey there were four or five meditators, including (In-ma-gyi" Thain-daung-taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw U") Yok-kan-da-ra',²⁶ who had meditated all 40 objects of meditation (*ka-ma-htan*"") under the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. Thet-gyi" taught him meditation the next day, and when made to recite a Pali verse, BK immediately felt the impermanence throughout his body and he meditated throughout the night with these feelings. The next morning Thet-gyi" came to enquire about the experiences, which he did every morning and every evening. He liked BK's experiences and told him to sit in meditation for another seven days, and to wear a white cloth²⁷ around his shoulders. Before BK left after seven days of meditation, Thet-gyi" showed him the monastery and pagodas of the area. It was very windy, and Thet-gyi" turned to BK, asking him, 'You who knows the *ta-ya*", do you have the courage to withstand the wind of the *ta-ya*". He told BK to continue his practice at home. From 1937 onwards BK visited Thet-gyi" every year to learn the method. Thet-gyi" also went occasionally to Rangoon to undergo worship (*pu-zaw ko" gwe-gyin hkan yu thi*) and to give instructions in BK's house.

BK's earliest encouragement for teaching meditation came from a famous member of the monastic order. In 1941 BK became a Railways' Department accounts officer.²⁸ The war had already started in the west, and there was the threat of war in Burma. On 2 July BK went to work at Myit-tha" station by Express train. Upon his return the train halted at Kyauk-hse station for a considerable time. In front of the station he could see the inviting Shwei-tha-lyaung" Hill, which he climbed without delay together with the assistant station master²⁹ to worship.³⁰ After worship on top of the hill, upon looking north he saw a beautiful little monastery at the foot of a mountain. The deputy station master told him it was inhabited by a venerated monk called

26 Htei" Hlaing (1981a:523-28) described (Thain-daung-in"ma'gyi"taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw U") Zaw"tl'ka', who visited the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, and who must be the teacher of (U") Yok-kan-da-ra'.

27 *Ta-hpet-hpyu*, for which another word is *law"bet*. Commonly put on during sabbath.

28 *Sa-yin"kaing-a-ya-shi'*.

29 *Let-htau-k-yon-paing*.

30 Tops of hills and mountains are favourite places for building pagodas.

Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw, who got his name from the Wei-bu-ya mountain spur, and who was thought by many in the area to be enlightened (*ya-han"da*). BK immediately wanted to go there, but the deputy station master remarked that Wei-bu was unlikely to receive them at that time of the day, and that he would take him later in the afternoon. After lunch at the station, BK went into his railway carriage and, taking the doctrine (*ta-ya"*) as object of consciousness, sent loving-kindness to the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw and petitioned the Hsa-ya-daw with his mind how they would come to pay their respects.

At about 3 pm they made their way by horse cart to this monastery, passing by the Ko"na-win Pagoda on the way. They met two nuns and explained that their purpose was to worship the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw, to which the nuns answered that it was not the right time to come, and that they should either come during morning breakfast or for evening preaching. BK said that it would not matter if they could not worship, as long as the two would show them the monastery where they might bow their heads in reverence. There he sat down and, at the place where he had taken his slippers off, he bowed his head aiming in the direction of the Hsa-ya-daw and setting in his mind 'Having come from Rangoon I have come to worship you Hsa-ya-daw'. At exactly that time the door of the monastery opened and the Hsa-ya-daw's face showed. He asked 'By what need do you worship layman?'. BK answered: 'Because I have the wish to achieve the Path and Fruition of Enlightenment (*mek-hpo neik-ban*), oh lord'. Hsa-ya-daw: 'Right... if you want to go to enlightenment (*neik-ban*), how do you propose to go?'. BK: 'With *Wi'pat-tha-na* knowledge I shall go, oh lord. Now I am also putting WM (*wi'pat-tha-na ta-ya"*) as object of consciousness, oh lord'. S., 'Very well...*tha-du', tha-du'*, how did you get this teaching (*ta-ya"*)?'. BK recounted how he had meditated under benefactor (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" for the first 7 days, and how he always meditated on the train while travelling. S.: 'In that case you layman must have perfection (*pa-ra-mi*). I thought one had to go into the forest for it and that it was such exhausting work'. They spoke like this for about an hour. BK left and went back the next day to offer the Hsa-ya-daw a vegetarian meal. People were so surprised to see the Wei-bu talk so much, as he was not usually that talkative. In the end Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw instructed;

'The teaching (*ta-ya"*) you layman have received, you are likely to have to distribute to others. The layman you are with now, you do not know when you will see him again, give it to him while you are still meeting up. Give him a little method. Give him the teaching (*ta-ya"*) as a layman after having changed to wearing a white cloth³¹. (p83)

31 *Beik-hpyu le"pi"*.

So back at the Kyauk-hsi station, BK taught the deputy station master in a railway carriage according to the Wei-bu's instructions; this was BK's first pupil in meditation. Thus, without relinquishing his responsibilities of government, he started practising and teaching meditation.

During the war, BK's responsibilities in government increased as the English fled and the Indians also leaving the accountancy department.³² At that time BK lived at Budd Road, and one day he went to the house of (Myan-ma' A-lin" U") Tin,³³ where they happened to discuss the doctrine (*ta-ya*"). But Big Teacher was a very practical man who was not satisfied with mere discussion, and who explained how the Buddha's teachings (*ta-ya*") can be tasted through practice. The Buddha himself invited people to experiment, observe and conclude³⁴, and BK explained how, if he wanted, BK could help with the experiment. He recounted how he had taken the teachings (*ta-ya*") from (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi", how he took the method, and how he taught Buddhism (*ta-ya*") according to the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw's instructions. Then (Myan-ma' A-lin" U") Tin went to BK's house together with (U") Nu' and Minister of Education (U") Hla' Min" to meditate.³⁵ They could all only reach the level of breathing as the object of meditation (*a-na-pa-na' ka-ma-htan*").

BK went to (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" and arranged that Prime Minister (U") Nu' and (U") Tin could go to meditate there. But because their heavy government responsibilities prevented them it was BK who had to assist with their difficulties in meditation. (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" had instructed Prime Minister (U") Nu' and (U") Tin that BK was like a doctor taking care of the sick. They should listen to the teaching (*ta-ya*") given by BK, and his morality, concentration and wisdom should be believed.

After that, Prime Minister (U") Nu' invited (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" to his home in Shwei-taung-kyā" Rd, where he worshipped him for one month and was taught meditation. After the war the English came back, and BK was promoted from 16 May 1945 to the rank of first class accounts officer³⁶, thereby becoming Deputy Accountant General³⁷. While meditating at the A-le-taw"ya' monastery, BK developed troubles with one of his eyes, which got so bad that he had to have it operated upon. He was not allowed to see in daylight, and had to stay in the dark. Meanwhile the health of (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" was bad too, and he came to Rangoon for treatment, staying at (U") On" Maung's house. They were not far away from each other, but as

32 During the period of Japanese occupation (1942-45) BK was Director of the Accountants and Auditors Department (Ngwei-sa-yin" hnin' Sa-yin" sit-ha-na' Hryun'gya" yei" wun) (p592).

33 See end-notes, (Myan-ma A-lin" U") Tin.

34 This is the Pali expression *ei-hi'pa-thi'kaw*", already treated as the scientific approach to Buddhism in preface p xli.

35 *Ta-ya*" *htaing thi*, lit. 'to sit the *ta-ya*".

36 *Sa-yin" hnin' Sa-yin" sit-wun-dan" Pa-ha-ma'dan*.

37 *Let-hauk Ngwei-sa-yin" min" gyi*".

they were both patients they could not meet up. Then BK heard that Thet-gyi" had died. On the night of his death he gave BK in his dream the instruction to preach the First Sermon (*Da-ma-set-kyā*) (on 14 December 1945, p592). Thet-gyi" was put in a cave north of the Shwei-da-gon, now called Martyr's Hill.³⁸

In November 1945 BK began to have eye problems affecting both eyes, for which he had to take leave between 23 November 1945 and 20 March 1946. The next year his eye disorder recurred and he was off work for a month from 7 July 1947. But he healed himself through meditation;

Hsa-ya-gyi" resolved (*a-deik-hian hpyin'*) to follow a prolonged fasting. After having meditated *wi'pat-tha-na* he observed the *ta-ya*" so as to see the impermanence in parts of the face. For nutrition he took only three mouthfuls (?) of rice with oil and salt...after one week or so he was free from disease, and it never came back '(p359)

BK reached the pinnacle of his meditation teacher and accountancy careers at roughly the same time. He got to the top of his accountancy profession at about the same time that he institutionalised his meditation; indeed, his success in one reinforced his success in the other. If in November 1917 he was the lowest clerk with only a 40 kyat salary, on Independence day of 4 January 1948 BK was the first Accountant General of Independent Burma, the highest rank in his profession, with a salary of 1600 Kyats. He had transformed the office from an Indian into a Burmese one. (U") Nu' had encouraged Buddhism (*tha-tha-na*), and BK managed to achieve a geometrical progression in religious works. Upstairs in the office he arranged a little room, equipping it with a Buddha shelf, where he taught his employees WM (*tha-ma-hta' wi'pat-tha-na*).³⁹

By 18 July 1951 BK no longer taught in the same manner as he had done before; he set up the Accountant-General Vipassana Research Association.⁴⁰ In this society morality was made into the foundation, and it was devoted to the progressive scientific research which began with work on concentration, and only went on to WM work once concentration was matured, testing whether it was in conformity with *Wi'thok-di mek*, and whether it was possible to achieve a break-through in respect of the 37 Laws of Enlightenment (*baw"di'pek-hki'ya' ta-ya*"). From their research it appeared that the true 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti'*) road, at the basis of which are morality, concentration and knowledge, were those methods requiring only a few days of meditation. Meditating like this, not only could they achieve WM intelligence, but at the same time they really found the welling up of special knowledge⁴¹ which could wash away the defilements and craving for origination.

38 The name of the hill was *A-za-ni Kon*".

39 This association, known as *Bok-da'tha-tha-na'a-kyo"hsaung A-thin*", was founded on 10 November 1950; it counted 497 members of which 24 were officials (p592).

40 Ngwei-sa-yin"min"gyi"yon" Wi'pat-tha-na-dat-pyin-ya A-hpwe'.

41 *Weik-za-dat a-htu*".

Some Indians were still in office, and BK did not only teach Burmese Buddhists but also these Indian Hindus. They included Deputy Accountant General Mr. Ei-in-dei⁴² bit, Deputy Accountant General Mr. Ei-mu-thi-ya and Mr. Venkataraman (Bin-ka'ta-ra-man). Being Hindus, after they practised meditation with breathing as its object (*a-na-pa-na*), they saw a light omen, and were very grateful to BK, and BK became their 'Big Gu-ru'. In their religion this Divine Light was the highest stage, a prize they never expected to achieve. But Mr. Venkataraman was a master of perfection (*pa-ra-mi*), and he went beyond meditation on breathing (*a-na-pa-na*) to find the true WM knowledge. This was ascertained by Ma-so⁴³ yein Hsa-ya-daw. Not only BK's staff, but their families came to get the teaching (*ta-ya*) from BK, and there was not enough space on the top floor of the office—more was needed.

BK called a meeting on 11 January 1952 to set up a committee of 10 people to raise the money to buy the grounds for a meditation centre. All members contributed 10 kyats, who found suitable land on the 15th of the same month. His pupils came and had a look at it: the Indian Venkataraman sat down on the ground and having taken the teaching (*ta-ya*) as his object of concentration, the 4 guardian nats of the teachings (*tha-tha-na*) arrived who encouraged him to take it quickly as it was true vantage ground (p99). BK and his pupils decided where to place the pagoda, and bought the land in May 1952 from (Nei-la'weik-za Hsa-ya) Hkaing. If the Accountant-General Vipassana Association⁴² had been set up on 24 April 1952, teaching began at the centre in a temporary hut on 1 May. On 8 May a beginning was made building the Da-ma'yaung-chi Pagoda, which was completed by 9 November 1952, when its umbrella was put on. It was the time of preparation for the Sixth Synod (*Than-ga-ya'na*), and there were many foreigners in Burma who sought to know about WM. The International Meditation Centre⁴³ had come into being.

From 1952, BK felt his main task was to teach meditation to foreigners. Though retired by June 1953, BK still worked hard to fulfil his many national responsibilities⁴⁴. At the same time he meditated daily, taught meditation, and preached. During 1955 the number of foreigners at the IMC increased.

When the revolutionary government came to power in 1962, BK played an important role in activities such as nationalising industry and demonetising the 50 and 100 kyat notes. BK was also on various committees, including the investigative committee into religion set up by the 1962 Revolutionary Council, of which (U") Lun" Baw was head, (U") Hla' Maung Secretary.

42 Ngwei-sa-yin⁴² min⁴² gyi⁴² yon⁴² Wi⁴² pat-tha-na A-hpwe'.

43 A-pyi-byi-hsaing-ya Pa-di⁴³ pat-ti⁴³ lok-ngan⁴³ Hta-na' (p100).

44 He was still Head of the Department of Merchandize and Crops, Head of the Traffic Auditors, and Head of the Accountancy School.

When (U") Lun" Baw died BK took over as treasurer. By Oct 1962 BK finished with this committee.

In October 1964 BK started to retire from almost all government work because of his urinary problems which first developed in April 1963, and because he wanted to devote his time to teaching meditation. BK moved to be present in IMC 24 hours a day. He requested government permission to visit Sri Lanka March 1966, but his request was refused. BK's dreams to missionise abroad in person were not to be realised. The news that he could not go abroad was brought by the Permanent Secretary to the Home Ministry himself. It was a matter of policy, and if policy changed he would be allowed to go abroad: 'For normal people this refusal to allow him to go abroad would have been terrible, but BK could bear it' (p405).

By April 1969, it was clear that even if the government were to change its mind, BK would no longer be able to go abroad: he was 71 years old and frail. So he sent a letter to those he identified as Masters of Perfection (*pa-ra-mi shin*), who included apart from three persons described in chapter 4—Coleman, Denison, and Hover, also Amersfoort from The Netherlands, Wright from the US, and Mrs. Za-lin-lan-di from Canada (p413), informing them that he had been refused permission to go abroad. He also told them that he had successfully experimented with remote control (*a-wei" hma' htein" kut sa-nit*), indicating that he could guide them from a distance, much like transmitting radio waves, and that he requested them to come to be trained as teachers. His choice of whom to train was made carefully, as they had to be free from physical and mental disease. BK instructed them by letter.

In 1969 BK had three operations for his kidney trouble. On the first two occasions BK recovered in the IMC attended by nurses. After the third operation in December he lost blood in his urine and was given a blood transfusion. The medicine stopped his bleeding, but he became dependent on it and started having problems with his teeth. BK died on 19 January 1971 due to kidney malfunction and internal haemorrhage. BK's ashes and bones were scattered in the river after cremation on 21 January. Candles were lit at night and the pupils meditated between 8.30 and 8.45. On 21 January 1971 an offering took place to 73 monks, and BK's remaining bones were cleaned in coconut milk. Though there is no direct reference to his achieving enlightenment (the term *pa-ri'neik-ban san thi* is not used for death), there is a covert hint of his saintliness;

The brilliance of the benefits of the merits of the morality, charity and meditation which Hsa-ya-gyi" performed in this life will be very great. Among these merits, the merit of the gift of the *da-ma'* being the most noble, there is no mistaking that among the benefits will be that he will have reached the top' (p440).

By the time of his death in 1971, BK had taught 3,500 yogis, including about 300 foreigners and distinguished Burmese visitors such as ex-president Saw" Shwei Thaik, (Myan-ma' A-lin" U")

Tin,⁴⁵ ex-deputy Prime Minister (U") Lun" Baw, ex-minister (U") San" Nyun', (U") Aung Hkaing, and (U") Hpo-gyi".

The hagiographies compared

Both hagiographies portray the careers of two meditation teachers in the context of a particular period in Burmese history during which WM came to be very popular and sponsorship was taken up by wealthy influential people. Indeed, both were initially in contact with the same circle of influential politicians, including Prime Minister (U") Nu' and other Ministers. Their influential careers began during the period known as 'the religious revival'⁴⁶, when the Burmese were preoccupied with the 2,500 year anniversary of Buddhism and the Sixth Buddhist Synod, and private associations sought to establish Buddhism as a major force in government and nationalism. The Sixth Synod was the first truly international Synod ever held, and it attracted considerable attention to Burmese Buddhism from all over the world. It was during this event that the achievements of the masters became apparent, and meditation centres proliferated all over Burma. BK received visits from foreign dignitaries at his newly built meditation centre, and the Ma-ha-si did more, being also sent abroad by government.

If we consider hagiographers having a choice, either to 'humanise' or to 'spiritualise' a subject, by either 'including episodes which reflect his common humanity' or 'by expunging references to his human weakness, mental lapses, signs of occasional cruelty, and so on' (Reynolds 1976:3), both hagiographies have, of course, clearly spiritualised their subjects.⁴⁷ Both masters are portrayed in conventional terms of exaltation, such as one finds in any hagiography on religious subjects: they had the attributes of Buddhist saints, namely of 'perfection' (*pa-ra-mi*) (e.g. BK p i,iii, 83,375; Ma-ha-si Thi-la-nan-da 1979:3); 'morality' (*thi-la*'), 'concentration' (*tha-ma-di*'), and 'insight' (*pyin-nya*) (BK p373,393,440; M piii,v). Both radiate 'loving kindness' (*myit-ta*) to their pupils (Ma-ha-si p74; BK p42,278). Both were characterised as 'benefactors' (*kyei"zu"shin*) (BK p462; Ma-ha-si p176-7). Both also practised a degree of dietary asceticism; BK abstained from eating 'four-legged' meats, eating only fish and fowl, whereas the Ma-ha-si, being a monk did not eat after 12 noon and while travelling practised *ok-deik-tha ka'ta-man-tha*', signifying that he

45 (Myan-ma' A-lin' U") Tin was also a member of the BTNA from which the Ma-ha-si meditation centres eventually emerged. This ex-minister was still active with the Ma-ha-si centre when I visited in 1981-2. See end-notes, (Myan-ma A-lin' U") Tin.

46 On 'religious revival' see ch. 1.

47 The hagiographer of the Ma-ha-si may have found it necessary to include a defense of the Ma-ha-si method against his Burmese and Sri Lankan critics, and BK may have been described as relishing his food (p354-5) and have been through an episode in his life where he wrote secular literature (p72), but by and large there are no negative things said in them.

did not eat eggs because he believed it to be an embryo specially killed for him personally (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:75).

But the BK hagiography differs from the Ma-ha-si hagiography in three important respects. First, BK has been spiritualised to a greater degree than the Ma-ha-si. The Ma-ha-si hagiography does not exactly draw the reader's attention to any negative personal characteristics, but the BK hagiography positively eulogizes its subject. On the front cover BK is also depicted with a halo⁴⁸ around his head, a manner in which I have never seen the Ma-ha-si depicted.

Second, while the whole chronological stretch of the Ma-ha-si's life is described from birth in fair detail, BK's hagiography is limited to the latter half of his life, after BK learnt *wi'pat-tha-na* from 1937 onwards. Completely lacking is the description of BK as a family man: nothing is conveyed about his family life, his wife and children. I finally found the name of his wife obscurely hidden in the episode of his death (p439) where we learn that she is called (Daw) On" Thwin. From hearsay I know that he had three children, a son and two daughters. But we do not know how many brothers and sisters he had, or how he interacted with his family. The first 19 years of his life are dismissed in less than half a page.

Third, stylistically the two hagiographies are very different. The BK hagiography is written to be scholarly—with full appendices, letters, and bibliography—as befits an author with university background—while the Ma-ha-si hagiography is in simple everyday language and aspires to no such scholarship, as befits a man selected by the Ma-ha-si for his clear and concise writing. Perhaps the scholarly approach to BK was also out of a concern to validate the life of an apparently secular layman and was in this sense somewhat defensive. This reminds one of the nineteenth century biography as described by Nadel (1984:6), where, 'The acceptance of the multi-volume life in the nineteenth century, inflated by lengthy excerpts from letters, reflects the importance of documents to validate a life, a defence as well as a justification of the biographical form.'

Hagiographical themes

Three overall themes are strongly present in both hagiographies, namely: the distinction between different forms of Buddhist action, in particular between scriptural learning and practice; the foreigner and the notion of 'globality'; and the master-pupil relationship and the notion of 'lineage'.

48 KN interpreted the halo as a clever presentation, because—with (U") Ba' Hkin sitting outside—it could also be interpreted as the full moon appearing behind him.

Scriptural learning vs practice

These terms have already been extensively discussed in chapter 3. The hagiographer rationalised Ma-ha-si's achievements in the realms of scriptural learning and practice by attributing to him certain ascribed characteristics of his native region. Shwei-bo is renowned for its monks' capabilities in both scriptural learning and practice, and as the Ma-ha-si's village 'partakes of this grace', so does the Ma-ha-si (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:18-19). Though the Ma-ha-si has quite separate scriptural learning and practice teacher lineages, these converge in the person of Thi-lon¹ Hsa-ya-daw (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:19-20). The name Thaw² 'ba-na', meaning 'beauty', was an early indication that 'his preceptor must have given him the name...with the wonderful foresight that this young priest...would rise to great heights with radiance in Buddhism, adroit in the field of practice and in the Buddhist scriptures' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:8).

The Ma-ha-si made progress from scriptural learning as follows: *by rote* and examination in his youth until the age of 24 in the monasteries of his home village environment (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:1-14); *by research* for one year in Mandalay (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:14-6); *by teaching* in Moulmein Taung-waing³ 'ga-lei' monastery from the age of 26 until his meeting with (U⁴) Nu' at the age of 45 (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:16-68); and finally by his scriptural learning of *practice* from about the age of 26 (his study of the *Tha-di'pa-htan thok*) (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:18). He attained the heights in his scriptural learning with his responsibility as Questioner of both the *Pi'ta-ka'* and the Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Synod (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:73-85) and as Editor of about 117 religious texts (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:83) and author of dozens more.

At the age of 27 (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:28), Ma-ha-si's practice career moved from the *textual study of practice* (from the moment he took an interest in studying texts of practice as noted above), to the *practice* of meditation under the Min⁵ 'gun' Hsa-ya-daw; to *teaching practice* during World War II to his relatives in his native Hseit-hkun Village from 1938 at the age of 34 (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:31-34); and to *writing practice* with his book *Method of Wi'pat-tha-na* soon after (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:44-54); and, finally, to *institutionalise practice* with the establishment of his first meditation centre in Hseit-hkun Village (BTNA 1980a: meditation centre no. 158), meditation associations such as the Tha-da-ma'pa-la' Wi'pat-tha-na Hpyan'hpyu⁶ 'yei' A-thin⁷ 'a-hpwe' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:58), and his support at the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha through the BTNA (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:68).

The Ma-ha-si always knew the value of scriptural learning to teaching practice (Thi-la-nan-da 1982:48-49), and his conscious efforts to conquer this knowledge first ensured his success—it made him attractive to famous people, which launched him into the realm of national and international Buddhism, and put him in touch with the highest offices in Burmese Government. But though the Ma-ha-si spent much of his life dedicated to scriptural learning, we are never

left in any doubt as to what he really wanted—he wanted to do practice. In his youth he took the decision to become a monk after novicehood because, although with his intelligence and knowledge of English he could succeed in the ‘human world’, he in fact treasured the ideas of going into ‘practice’ and this ‘was only possible to do... successfully from within the society of monks’ (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:11-12). He studied for his scriptural learning exams not because he ‘only had the desire to perform scriptural learning ... but for the reasons that he was not yet complete in scriptural learning and that he was too young as yet, he had to control his desire for practice’. During that period ‘he did not forget to practise asceticism in order to lay the foundation on morality, which is the foundation of practice’ (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:13). Resolved that ‘one day in the near future I shall apply myself to practical study’, he nevertheless went to Mandalay.

There is clear evidence of a tension in Ma-ha-si’s life between his desire to do and teach practice, and his duty to achieve his teaching qualifications in scriptural learning and instruct his students. This tension was particularly marked in his youth, while the Ma-ha-si was teaching at Taung-waing“ga-lei” monastery, where he was given permission only very reluctantly to meditate at the Min“gun” Hsa-ya-daw by his abbot, who preferred him to remain as a teacher of scriptural learning (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:27). After his meditation experience, he could not limit himself to practise only, but had to take care of the Taung-waing“ga-lei” monastery, which, being a scriptural learning monastery, prevented him from meditating to his heart’s content. During his early trips between Taung-waing“ga-lei” and Hseit-hkun Village he had to alternate between teaching scriptural learning and teaching practice. It was not until after the War that his life changed and he could devote himself entirely to practise (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:43).

As for (U“) Ba’ Hkin, he is described, like the Ma-ha-si, as a man of exceptional intelligence who was always first in class as a student (p67-68), who could ‘recite accountant books from back to front’ (p71), and who studied the *A-bi‘da-ma* and Le-di Hsa-ya-daw’s books already in 1931 (p591). But BK’s expertise was not Buddhist scriptural learning like the Ma-ha-si; even though BK gave up his ‘worldly’ literary interest for Buddhist ‘otherworldly’ learning (pp75-81), and eventually wrote ‘Scriptural learning is the basis, and practice provides the true answer’ (*Pa-ri‘yat-ti‘a-chei-gan hnin’ pa-di‘pat-ti‘a-hpyei-hman*) (p215) which evidently involved some familiarity with the scriptures, scriptural learning was not his strongest point (presumably it was also difficult to compete with full-time monks like the Ma-ha-si). Thus, if in the Ma-ha-si hagiography the themes of ‘scriptural learning’ and ‘practice’ weave, as it were, the plot of the book, in the BK hagiography these play a role, but BK is primarily portrayed as an exceptional teacher of practice who was, as a high ranking government civil servant, also a man of repute in the secular world.

BK's true qualifications lay in his practical experience of practice, not his scriptural learning background. This is the quality (Hsa-ya) Thu'hka' drew attention to in his preface to the hagiography;

'it is not a Buddhist (*da-ma*) work in the sense of a collection of discourses... but this is a hagiography in the sense of a collection of events pertaining to a person's practical findings, who was successful in practice according to the discourse exercises, and in teaching his pupils..'

Nonetheless, good meditation teachers establish credibility with their pupils by demonstrating their knowledge of the scriptures. But BK, whose Buddhist knowledge was primarily based on self-taught experience, needed to have his competence in scriptural learning confirmed by third parties, mainly by monks. BK's knowledge of scriptural learning was established indirectly from famous learned monks such as the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw and others, who appear every once in a while in the hagiography to sanction BK's teachings as correct. His work 'Scriptural learning is the basis of practice' recorded Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw's teachings, and visiting famous monks (in particular Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw himself) sanctioned it; this helped confirm BK's teachings as scripturally correct. Above all, however, BK's quality of scriptural learning was borrowed from his teacher lineage, the practice side of a lineage combining scriptural learning and practice earlier on;

If we look at the roots of this perfection to be able to teach and missionize abroad we may have to pay respects to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. Just like the big river Irawaddy comes into being through its tributaries, Le-di Hsa-ya-daw became what he was due to the combination of scriptural learning and practice, and became known beyond Burma, even in England. His true pupil was A-na-gan (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi". Like (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi", who had taken the method from that noble lord Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, (U") Ba' Hkin took it from (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi". It is because of these events, this lineage, that this (U") Ba' Hkin also distributed Buddhism (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*) all over the world. (Ko Lei" 1980:ii)

So though BK advocated meditation as a layman for laymen, the monk was crucial to the Ba' Hkin life as described in the hagiography; he sought permission to teach from monks, for his funeral monk's advice was sought, and so on.

The Ma-ha-si's dilemma between scriptural learning and practice may have been a typical monk's dilemma, which BK, being a layman, did not suffer from. Present here, on the other hand, is a typical layman's dilemma such as we have met in the previous chapter, namely whether to follow Buddhist practice in the sense of concentration meditation or WM. We also learn of the transition Thet-gyi" (one of BK's teachers) underwent from concentration meditation, which he studied for 7 years under Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw, to WM, which he studied under the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. BK began with concentration meditation in 1 January 1937, followed a week later by WM. However, concentration meditation has continued to play a role in BK's life and in his tradition; the mystic notions of radio waves and distant control, and the widespread vegetarian diet offered in the centre are closely associated with concentration. The element of concentration is important for 'success' and for enhancing 'control', particularly among the

unordained; for the monks scriptural learning is of benefit, attracting sponsorship by laity and making it relatively easy to get a movement off the ground.

The hagiographies evidently ascribe a positive value to scriptural learning and they also show what we considered in chapter 3, namely how scriptural learning introduced a dynamic tension between Buddhism as set down and conveyed through recitation, reading, writing and preaching, and Buddhism as practised through personal experimentation resulting in experience and intuitive knowledge. It was recognised that text could be used to improve on, or express and record practice. Thus KL argued that the details of BK's life had to be recorded so as not to allow the tradition of practice to float away unnoticed (p ix-x, 9-12). But there was also the condemnation of concern with text *per se*. In the BK hagiography, KL observed the similarities of practice with modern scientific methodology—as dealing with experiment, observation and conclusion—in opposition to mere discussion and reading (p 12,84). KL's textual preoccupation was an important source of friction in his relationship with BK: KL was told off for thinking about how to write a book about meditation in Burma (p283). In the Ma-ha-si hagiography the monks in Sri Lanka are described as knowing scriptural learning, which meant that they could instruct on charity and morality, but they could not, on that basis, be qualified to instruct on practice. In the section 'Thaw^{ba}-na' and practice' (p 18-26), Thaw^{ba}-na' considered scriptural learning to be useless without practice—it was like 'hearsay', like 'reading about medicine but not swallowing it', like travelling 'by reading books' or 'by looking at pictures'.

The foreigner and the 'global approach'

Another way in which both hagiographies varied was in their approach to their subjects in interaction with the international world and the foreigner. The Burmese, despite a government policy of international isolationism, are highly tuned to what is going on in other countries. The BBC External Services, for example, are swamped with more letters in response to broadcasts to Southeast Asia from the Burmese audience than from other countries. This outward orientation played a role in the way Burmese Buddhism evolved, particularly in meditation. The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, the monk to whom many look up as the founding father of the early Burmese WM tradition, also dealt a great deal with foreigners, helping to set up the Foreign Buddhism Promotion Society (*Naing-ngan-gya" Bok-da'tha-tha-na-pyu' A-thin"gyi"*) (Wun-ni'ta' 1956:130-134).

The importance of 'international' relations is symbolised by the Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha logo, which adorns the title page of BTNA publications, where the Big Drum (translation of 'Ma-ha-si') is depicted over Burma in the centre of the world. The Ma-ha-si hagiography was published to show Ma-ha-si's fame in international Buddhism;

...in order that there be no possibility of hiding from Buddhists the Ma-ha-si's vigour in energetically achieving the brilliance of practical Buddhism (*pa-di'pat-ti'tha-tha-na*) to reach as far as beyond Burma—such as Asia, America, and Europe, and in as much as it is the responsibility of present Buddhists to advance Buddhism (*la-ya*) for the benefit of those who come later; and in order to establish and prolong the practice of Buddhism.' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:v-vi)

The Ma-ha-si had a predisposition to learn foreign knowledge, as was evident in his knowledge of English and Indian classical languages, and also in his answers to the questions on life by the western educated doctor (U") Myin' Hswei (see chapter 2). The Ma-ha-si got on with foreigners, taught them and corrected their views where necessary, such as in his introduction to *Wi'thok-di mek*, where he criticised foreign views of the hagiography of Bok-da'gaw"tha' (p128). The Ma-ha-si made many trips abroad to Laos, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, etc. on invitations from foreign governments and Buddhist associations, and he published many English language articles and books. When the hagiographer explained what practice is like, it is not like reading 'tourist' guides, but actively going to the place in question and seeing it for yourself.

'Foreignness' and 'globality' play an even more important role in the description of BK's life. On the back cover of the BK hagiography too, we see a world map, covered with little dots representing pockets of Burmese WM contacts in foreign countries through students, and where countries coloured yellow indicate the establishment of a permanent centre. A large proportion of writings were of course published in English by both meditation masters, but the BK meditation centres are actually referred to as 'International Meditation Centres'.

BK himself had never been abroad (he did not get government permission), and BK's most faithful Burmese pupils (with the exception of the author himself)—such as Hsa-ya-ma', (U") Tin' Yi and (U") Ba' Hpo—did not have separate sections dedicated to them in the hagiography, whereas foreigners did. KL gave only the briefest summary of BK's life (one chapter out of thirteen), and produced mainly correspondence and testimonies from foreigners (Westerners and Indians in Burma) who were mostly highly placed people (professors, doctors, Ambassadors, Ministers, etc.).

The role of the foreigner was more than important to the BK hagiography—it structured it. Chapter 1 (pp1-66) dealt almost entirely with 7 important foreign pupils of Ba' Hkin; chapter 3 dealt partly with foreigners (pp100-106); chapter 4 (pp106-212) dealt entirely with 8 important foreign pupils; chapter 7 (pp322-354) dealt with Goenka, the Indian pupil who lived in Burma and then went on to teach the Ba' Hkin meditation method in India; ch 8 dealt partly with the Israeli Ambassador's meditation (370-74) and missions abroad in the west (pp 387-399); chapter 9 dealt in part with foreign pupils and missions abroad (pp 413-418); chapter 10 dealt partly with missions abroad in India and in the west (pp 467-473, 486-543). These sections were greatly

lengthened by the inclusion of large amounts of correspondence between Ba' Hkin and his foreign pupils.

Unlike the author of the Ma-ha-si hagiography, KL conveyed much about himself in the book and in writing his own introduction (not the case in the Ma-ha-si hagiography). In this, there is great emphasis on the foreigner. Of BK's dual career, his religious career was depicted as lying abroad (despite him never having been abroad), whereas his secular career was in Burma. BK was known abroad as a meditation teacher (where they knew him as a *gu-ru'gyi*"), but in Burma he was known as a high government servant;

'Truly, it is not so that the whole world knows BK as Threi-si-thu BK, the high rank official from Burma. They only knew him as the Head of the Meditation Centre from the base of the Da-ma'yaung-chi Pagoda. To these people the title Threi-si-thu does not mean anything. There is only the meaning of 'Big teacher' and *gu-ru'gyi*. This is very strong. They know, respect, and feel well disposed towards only the meditation teacher. Nor does the author respect Hsa-ya-gyi" merely because he is the chief of a Department having leadership qualities. We did not interact from the time that he took the burden of government responsibility. It was the respect from 1960 onwards of him only as meditation teacher who taught in practice the noble Laws (*ta-ya*) of the Buddha which can send one into the bliss of *neik-ban*...' (vi).

KL therefore described how he began to respect BK after he learnt about his religious conquest through a foreigner; despite all the efforts of his Burmese aunt and uncle, who were trying to convince him to meditate at BK's centre, he only began meditation after reading a foreign publication about the place. KL did not listen to his Burmese relatives, but he did believe foreign academics. This admiration for BK derived through 'foreign' influences was aptly conveyed in the following conversation between the hagiographer and his Burmese friend who had been to Washington on a business trip;

(Friend) 'What are you writing about this time, history or politics?'...

(KL) 'You will be very surprised if I⁴⁹ tell you, it has nothing to do with politics, but I suppose one could call it a historical record, but not an ordinary one, I am writing a marking post in the history of Buddhism and missionary work'.

(F) 'What kind of marking post in missionary work?'.

(KL) 'Well, I see it like this. Markings are planted which are called "mile posts" and which stick out at major roads so that the way may be known, aren't they? In a similar manner I hope to write his hagiography like planting a mile pole for people to know how successful the Buddhist missionary works of the missionary Hsa-ya-gyi" BK are'.

(F) 'You mean Hsa-ya-gyi" BK, the ex Accountant General who died last month. Yes, I only got to know about him while in America. It was a surprise. While I had been in Burma I had merely heard of him, but paid no attention then'.

(KL) 'Yes tell me, we from Burma do not hear much about the meditation work of Hsa-ya-gyi", but abroad the story of success of the work of Hsa-ya-gyi" has spread extensively'.

(F) 'That is a fact. It was only when I arrived in Washington on a business trip, in 1960 I believe it was, that I got to know about Hsa-ya-gyi" BK's teaching of the Buddha's *ta-ya*"... There was a Buddhist preaching, and because they went from the Embassy I went along with them... The talk, called "Method of practical experience of the Buddha's *ta-ya*" was given by a negro professor ... His name was Dr. Lyon Wright. I will never forget in my life about him, or about his name and his teaching. He explained: that the essence of Buddhism was the idea of impermanence; to see this you must exercise yourself;... that he had meditated himself at the Da-ma'yaung-chi Pagoda (IMC) in Rangoon 3 years ago; that the person who

49 In English translation I am forced to introduce pronominal reference 'I'. In Burmese this reference is much less frequent, and does not occur in this passage at all.

taught him was Gu-ru'gyi" BK, who was a top official in the Burmese government...; and, saying that one could calm one's body, he made us meditate for 5 minutes. Very surprising indeed!

(KL) 'I would like to write quite a lot in the book about this story in which this Dr. Wright went to meditate at BK's'.

(F) 'Very good! Go ahead and write! Do you now understand the reason for my surprise?'

(KL) 'It is because a negro should sit in meditation and teach, isn't it?'

(F) 'Yes, that also. But what really surprised me most of all is that I, a Rangoonite, who had lived all my life in Rangoon, who worked in Rangoon, should not know about the Da-ma'yaung-chi Pagoda from In"ya"myaing Road, and that I should get to know about it only when explained by Dr. Wright. I knew about the work of Accountant General BK, but I did not know about his teaching of meditation. That I, a Rangoonite, a Burmese and a Buddhist, should get to know only after being told by an American negro professor, what a surprise, what a surprise!' (vii-viii).

KL revealed BK to the Burmese through the eyes of a foreigner—'That I, a Rangoonite, a Burmese and a Buddhist, should learn only after being told by a negro professor, what a surprise..'. He also claimed this foreigner to be important in his motivation to describe BK—'I would like to write quite a lot in the book about this story in which this Dr. Wright went to meditate at BK's' (p8). KL explained his inclusion of experiences by foreign pupils saying: 'My view is that the readership is interested in special personal experiences... the readership's attention will be attracted to the brief stories of how various foreigners recounted their own experiences.' (xiii) Though BK's government career was the subject of lengthy description in the hagiography, as it was a known factor in Burma, KL stated his primary aim to be to communicate BK's success as a meditation teacher abroad to the Burmese readership:

The author, ever since arriving at Big Teacher's in 1960 (due to the reading of a work written by a foreigner), has wanted to know about the hagiography of Hsa-ya-gyi". I wanted to know about the teaching of Hsa-ya-gyi". Because of the teachings of Hsa-ya-gyi" I wanted to know about those who had become sons and pupils of the Buddha because of his teachings. When I got to know about these things I wanted to explain to friends. But not only to friends, but I wanted the Burmese in general to know the story of successful great missionary work initiated by Hsa-ya-gyi" which has been successful all over the world...the first aim of this book is to let the Burmese know the *da-ma'* works of the already world renowned In"ya"myaing IMC WM instructor Hsa-ya-gyi" BK. While writing this it is becoming more and more clear that the missionary work of Hsa-ya-gyi" has become a mark in history and is suitably put on record...That is why I put as first and foremost aim of this book to let Burmese know about the *da-ma'* works of (U") Ba' Hkin, who taught the *wi'pat-tha-na* method from the International Meditation Centre at In"ya"myaing road about which the world already knew." (p viii-ix).

This emphasis on BK's foreign reputation did not mean that BK's government career was thereby made out to be less important in the hagiography: on the contrary, its description added lustre to BK's credibility. But this emphasis on his religious career did mean that the hagiography was about conveying from the 'foreign' religious sphere of fame to the 'Burmese' secular sphere, and this resulted in the most striking prominence of testimony by foreigners of BK's religious achievements. In other words, not only was the author introduced to BK through foreign publications, but he introduced the reader in this very same manner.

Foreigners went hand in hand with modern science, and so BK's meditation method was portrayed as scientific, as was KL's approach to description;

The reader will find that in this book the presentation of circumstances and the method of writing is quite unlike comparable works...The Buddha's noble laws (*ta-ya* ") which invite Come! Observe!

Experiment is a truly scientific method with a systematic quality. It is knowledge of the highest kind which can be presented, dissected and analyzed according to scientific method. That is why the practical exercise of the Buddha *ta-ya* must be presentable according to the practical methods of presentation of science...

A scientist upon presentation of a fact to the scientific world must show the experiments he has performed in great detail. This is the stage of 'experiment'. Then comes the description of results of the experiment. This is called 'observation'. Taking these observations you have to recount your explanation. This is called 'conclusion'.⁵⁰ The presentation of these three phases will come to be read by other scientists, who will then proceed to perform experiments of their own. If their experiments and observations conform to the original scientist, then the scientific world will accept the conclusion as true. This in brief is the method of working in the world of science' (xii).

If foreigners evolved and represent science, the fact that they were interested in BK and his meditation method confirmed BK as a teacher of a scientific method. In spite of not knowing the scriptures, these foreigners derived the right knowledge of Buddhism through BK's method;

(U") Ba' Hkin showed the way and ordered to experiment according to the Buddha's deferential-law of formation expounded in the discourse on mindfulness (*tha-di'pa-hian*). Those who experimented wrote down in detail their experiences. They recorded in detail all the events they observed. Amongst those who did so are western top science doctors and university professors. This book includes passages from their records. Their originality is that their observations are recorded in ordinary local language and I have translated them without using scriptural language. In reality these people are not knowledgeable in the scriptures. The author himself also did not know scripture until he once became monk. Therefore those who wrote recorded their own experiences in English prose, which the author has in turn translated into Burmese prose. There is no longer the possibility of including scriptural language...To say it in a different way, you will read the Buddha's difficult laws of impermanence, suffering and non self set out in easy an ordinary language, not mixed with scriptural sounds and Pali. (xii-xiii)

The foreigner figured large in the BK hagiography. In the end one might argue that this emphasis by BK himself on teaching foreigners was responsible for the self-selection of the hagiographer too—being a university chancellor he set great store by foreign opinion, and he meditated after reading a foreign work and meeting foreigners practising the method. The hagiography was intended to remedy the lack of BK's reputation as a meditation teacher in Burma by focusing on his teaching legacy among foreigners. The foreigner thus not only *kindled* KL's interest in BK and *figured large* in his description of BK's life, but also provided valid criteria for judging BK's achievement in meditation—the foreigner's high opinion of BK lent his religious career a credibility which it could not otherwise possess, namely of his meditation method as a 'science'.⁵¹

Finally, we may ask: what are the conditions by which hagiography comes about? what are its agents? There will be many other reasons why hagiographies will have been written of Buddhist teachers, but one very important reason is to *universalise* Buddhism and make it

50 The author used English words for 'experiment', 'observation' and 'conclusion'.

51 It should be noted that the emphasis on the foreigner, the globalization of meditation and its marriage with science, is present in other meditation systems also, such as the transcendental meditation movement (See Forem (1973) on 'the Science of Creative Intelligence' (p99) and the focus on the west because of the potential in spreading the message more quickly, 'where transportation and communication are so much more efficient' (p 8)).

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Figure 9. The two 'modern' hagiographies discussed in this chapter are unencumbered with the astrological charts commonly found in most monk hagiographies. While there would appear to be a tendency for astrological charts to be excluded from modern biographies, including the majority of biographies of WM teachers, this is not the case with all of them. The above astrological chart (za-da) of the Sun "lun" Hsa-ya-daw was published in his hagiography. In the bibliography I signal those hagiographies of teachers with astrological charts.

relevant to everyone, including the non-Buddhist foreigner. In Burma, in 1972 the last of 8 volumes on the life of the Buddha (approx 800 pages each—exhaustively indexed) was published, which must be the largest hagiographical account in Burmese history (and perhaps internationally) devoted to the Buddha's life in chronological order and compiled from a variety of sources. The author, the (Ti'pi'ta-ka' Hsa-ya-daw U") Wi'seit-ta'tha-ra', was the monk replier to whom the Ma-ha-si was questioner during the Sixth Synod. The hagiography was commissioned by Prime Minister (U") Nu' in 1955, because:

...although non-Buddhists may easily hear and understand the sounds uttered by Buddhists—'Oh Noble Buddha, Oh Noble Buddha'—because they have not understood the qualities of the Buddha they cannot be said to have heard properly... That is why, because I want to make them understand about the noble Buddha, I entreat you to write the best and most comprehensive hagiography of the Buddha' (Vol I, Preface).

There are parallels between the way this Buddha hagiography was written, and the way the hagiographies of 20th century Burmese meditation masters were. There would appear to be an underlying current of self-conscious religious practice in the systematisation of hagiography—a sense of converting a particularistic Buddhism of episodic ritual context into a systematic religion suitable for communication in a competitive environment amongst other religions and western science. We have already noted the role of the foreigner in KL's motivation to write Ba' Hkin's hagiography (the American black professor inspired him) and, indeed, the foreigner's role in the Ma-ha-si hagiography ('to reach as far as beyond Burma—such as Asia, America, and Europe'). But a role is played by the foreigner too in the emergence of new styles of hagiography generally, through technology and literary criticism. Interaction with the foreigner, who

demands a systematic treatment of life with a beginning and an end, was what brought into life new sorts of hagiography more 'true' to a western sense of history and biography.

The master-pupil relationship

The master-pupil relationship is the third and final theme I would like to address in relation to the two hagiographies. Teachings have to be authenticated, the inheritance of duties and commands have to be substantiated; a hagiography serves to establish such rights after death. The Buddha derived his legitimacy from contact with a previous Buddha, with the episode where in his previous life as hermit Thu'mei-da he lay across the ditch for the Di-pin-ka'ra Buddha to walk across and made the vow himself to become a Buddha one day. It ends with an account of his pupils, the Buddhist Synods, and the legacy he left behind up until our contemporary times. The hagiographies considered here also took care in documenting the lineages through which their subjects got their methods, and in showing who they passed these methods on to, clearly sanctioning these as teachers in their tradition. BK got it from (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi", who got it from the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, and passed it onto his pupils. The Ma-ha-si got it from the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw who got it from the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw, and passed it onto his pupils.

There are two important differences in respect of lineage between the Ma-ha-si and Ba' Hkin as these emerge from the hagiographies.⁵² First, the Ma-ha-si hagiography described two distinct lineages (though they merged higher up at the level of the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw): one was based on ordination and scriptural learning, going back to his preceptor U" A-deik-sa, and one was based on the tradition of practice going back to the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw. Yet Ba' Hkin was not permanently ordained, and had only the practice lineage linked to Hsa-ya Thet-gyi". Though the latter instructed him to teach, he was a layman with no significant public credibility. Furthermore, the Ma-ha-si renounced to meditate with the Min"gun" for a prolonged period with no possessions, where BK always remained a family man with a government job (eventhough he went on an 'arduous journey' to meditate across the river from Rangoon).

The hagiography seems to have resolved Ba' Hkin's legitimacy problem in two ways. Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" had been told to teach by his teacher, the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. Ba' Hkin needed a famous monk to legitimise him as a teacher too so as to ensure that he was part of a continuous tradition back to the time of the Buddha. Since he had been ordained once temporarily for some days under the Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw, he sought this monk's sanction to teach. For an unordained person, the sanction to teach from a famous monk is the next best thing to permanent ordination oneself into an established lineage. The second way was to build a sacred pagoda, the power of

52 See chapter 3 on 'practice' and 'scriptural learning lineage'.

which he could tap and use to send waves to the distant places spanning the geographical boundaries he was never allowed to cross. BK built and consecrated a pagoda in his meditation centre compound, from which—together with the Brahma heavenly beings who themselves perpetuated the Buddha's teachings—he was capable of tapping cosmic energy (*dat*), and emanate this to his pupils abroad at set times when he was incapable of physically being in their presence.

Second, there was a stylistic difference in the way the authors dealt with the legacy of their subjects. The Ma-ha-si heritage was not described in terms of the lives of the pupils the way Ba' Hkin was. The only exception was the account of the trip abroad to Sri Lanka by his pupils which really served to account simply for his legacy (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:98-103). The BK hagiography on the other hand, was much more a pupil centered hagiography which used the pupil-master relationship as a device to structure the plot and give BK's life content. Only 27 pages out of the 600 of this hagiography⁵³, went into any detail about BK's life, while the rest of the hagiography was about his pupils.⁵⁴ Unlike the simple chronological arrangement for the Ma-ha-si hagiography, the order of the BK hagiography was—though not without a sense of unfolding chronologically from the beginning of BK's life in chapter 2, to the commemoration 10 years after his death in chapter 10—based on a 'hopping' chronology, where the episodes of BK's predominantly foreign pupils were meant to convey the unfolding of his life. The result was less a hagiography in the sense of an account of an individual's life than a lineage history.

This latter difference in hagiographical style, where the Ba' Hkin hagiography tends towards a historical lineage, raises a number of questions. Perhaps BK's death allowed the author and pupils more freedom of composition? Or perhaps Ba' Hkin, because he was not a monk, needed more witness accounts to have his sacredness established? Or perhaps it was just an idiosyncrasy on the part of the author?

I thought about this problem after my analysis of the Burmese concept of biography (as summarised in appendix F) and feel that in Burmese hagiography we are dealing with a fundamental sense of *dispersed* biography in space and time which has remained a feature even in modern Buddhist hagiography such as the ones considered in this chapter.

What do I mean by 'dispersed' biography. First, this is implicit in the difference between 'author' and 'subject' focused biographical writing. In appendix F I have noted how traditional

53 The appendix (pp 591-96) and chapter 2 (at 22 pages one of the briefest of the 12 chapters).

54 Apart from chapter 2, small episodes on Ba' Hkin's life are also recounted in a subsection on 'the looking for a place and the building', pp 98-100, in the chapter on the relationship between the hagiographer and BK (ch 6), in the two chapters on the deteriorating health, death and subsequent commemoration of BK (ch 8,9), and in the chapter on the contents of his preaching (ch 11). The rest of the work is about the meditation centre and its pagoda (ch 3) and the role of nationally famous monks in attending the opening festival and encouraging Ba' Hkin's work (ch 5).

Burmese classification is 'subject' oriented with an emphasis on the sacredness of the biographical subject, where classifications of western biography (as now increasingly adopted in Burma) are largely 'author' oriented, based on method and style of writing. If the former is allowed to range freely in space and time, the latter demands a precise adherence to the rules of scientific history where human beings move in only one space and one time.

Second, Buddhist hagiography is about a life which proliferates into multiple notionally related lives across space and time. It deals with life, not as a portrait of an individual being in between the cradle and the grave, but as an endless series of events pertaining to multiple personalities bound up in the biographical subject. In both humanity occupies a privileged position; but while the status of the subject in the cosmology presumed in modern biography is fixed, its status in the Burmese Buddhist hagiography is not fixed but a crossroads between many—other possible positions in the cosmology. It is a forever evolving event without beginning or end; Buddhist life proceeds not only through various births as a member of different human socio-cultural environments with different physiques, but it is part of that process of continuity between all cosmological planes of existence, which share the same laws of life, namely 'action' (*kan*) and 'cause and effect' (*a-kyauṅ" a-kyo"*). Differences among people, and the difference between human and animal are but temporary differences based on the consequence of personal action and the law of cause and effect, not a difference of permanent status in the universe as endowed by some supernatural entity. Life here signifies an open perpetual cycle not a closed episode broken by death, but only broken by knowledge through WM meditation.

At-htok-pat-ti' and the notions of rebirth (and non-self) in the Burmese tradition do not allow rigid boundaries around a person's life as a biological temporally and spatially bound organism: while it is inconceivable in western tradition that one person can at the same time represent several historical personages, in the Burmese tradition this is a distinct possibility—Gotama's life is treated in terms of at least 547 discrete lives, each of which represents a different aspect of the quest for Buddhahood and illustrates a different moral point. In the Ma-ha-si hagiography we saw how Sir U" Thwin and the Ma-ha-si were linked in past lives. In chapter 6 we also saw how U" Lei" was convinced that the ancient Ba"me" Hsa-ya-daw and the famous meditation teacher the Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw were one and the same person. The fact that the Sun"lun" had been long dead and U" Lei" was still being visited by this monk who came with advice, means that people were wrong in assuming that he had achieved the state of *ya-han"da* (in which case he would no longer be among men at death)./

Second, this account of an individual who is potentially dispersed among an infinite range of lives has implications for the concept of *tradition*. Fluid boundaries between the lives of teacher and pupil, and author and reader, means that their relationships are no longer temporally and

spatially discrete either. For example, the Ma-ha-si is conceived by his hagiographer as linked to his benefactor in a previous life, because it is no coincidence that they both have the same name. If in the West we can only talk of *resemblance*, *emulation*, or *influence*, in the Buddhist tradition we can actually talk of two persons having the same *identity*, either by being that person reincarnated, or by having been associated with that person in previous lives. Here the concepts of hagiography and lineage imperceptably range into one another.

In these 'dispersed' type hagiographies, with their mish-mash of identities and transformations, how can we maintain a distinction between biography in the sense of individual life, and 'cumulative biography' in the sense of a tradition or a history?

This problem does not appear to preoccupy Burmese authors. In appendix F I argue that the Burmese concept of 'biography' (*at-htok-pat-ti*) has a wide latitude of meaning ranging from 'fact' or 'episode', to 'life' of a person, down to 'history of an institution'. I now wish to show how both hagiographies fall within this wide latitude of meaning the Burmese 'biography' (*at-htok-pat-ti*) concept possesses: Buddhist hagiography is both about the life of an individual, as well as about history.

There is no evidence of a total Buddha biography (in the sense of a systematised single life) until the Commentaries of the 5th century AD, almost a millennium after his death. For a long time his life was episodically remembered in the form of a collection of diverse episodes stretching across several lives. Reynolds (1976) distinguished four such separate strands of 'episodic' biography to the Buddha's life, all of which developed largely independently from each other in their own time and context: (i) *zat* tales of the Buddha's previous lives; (ii) the Buddha's genealogy, birth and youth;⁵⁵ (iii) the Buddha's enlightenment and the early phases

55 Initially during the pre-Asokan period, considered part of the normative tradition and thought to have originated from the Buddha's preachings. Two late texts in the Pali canon, namely the *Buddhavamsa* and the *Cariyapitaka*, contain the stories of the future Gotama Buddha in relation to the Jatakas, namely his encounters with 24 previous Buddhas and the 35 stories of acquisition of the great perfections leading to Buddhahood. In the post-canonical tradition the Jataka Commentary appears in Ceylon in the 5th century AD containing 547 stories. More were added later on in the various Buddhist traditions.

of his ministry⁵⁶; iv) the accounts of the final months of this life, his Great Decease, and the distribution and subsequent fate of his relics.⁵⁷ Reynolds referred to the writing and rewriting of these as the 'biographical process', where on the one hand individual episodes were subject to diversification and embellishment over time in quite different places and contexts, and on the other, came to be unified in chronological sequence in the 5th century AD.⁵⁸

Tambiah (1984:116-9), in his analysis of the background to Thai meditation teacher hagiographies, made the distinction between two notions of hagiography in the Buddhist tradition, namely as *avadāna*⁵⁹, which is the earliest name for a biographical episode such as indicated above, as it 'seems to have referred to a great action having decisive consequences' used to 'highlight a point of discipline or a moral precept', and *vamsa*, a much later development which 'implied some kind of succession of kings or teachers'. Tambiah went beyond Reynold's analysis of the biographical process in suggesting that the Buddha biography itself became the kernel of complete histories through transformations which he calls 'periodizations'.⁶⁰ Using the Sinhalese *Mahāvamsa* and the Thai *Jinakalamali* as examples, he characterised the Buddha hagiography as forming 'a necessary prelude to their (Sinhalese and Thai) religio-political tales'—i.e. both to the monastic religio-history as well as the secular chronicle (Tambiah 1984:119-21). This, of course, is the case in the Burmese Buddhist and royal chronicles too, which

56 Though there are early references (see Mahapadana Sutta, which did not receive canonical form until after Asokan period), the rich narrative accounts serving as sources for modern historical accounts of this phase of the Buddha's life represent a relatively late development. No orthodox version of the Buddha's ancestry would appear to have been formulated until the 5th century AD.

57 The most important to the monks who compiled and transmitted the tradition. With the increased popularity in the post-Asokan period of the pilgrimage sites at Uruvela, the Deer Park at Benares, and Rajagaha, there was an increased emphasis on the royal and mythic qualities of the Buddha, and over time new episodes were accepted in the narration of events pertaining to Enlightenment.

58 Reynolds (1976: 50) says about this

'it is necessary to take account of the fact that in the fifth century A.D. the Theravadins began to compile biographical accounts which brought together and synthesized many of the previously segmented narratives'.

We may ask whether it is coincidence that imagery of the Buddha as a person did not appear until this period of unifying biographical episodes?

59 See end-notes, 'a-pa'dan'.

60 'After his (the Buddha's) death, the preservation and maintenance of the doctrinal knowledge and relics of the Master passed from an individual *mahapurusa* (great man) to a collective fraternity of monks, the *sangha*. We thus get the transition from a "biography" to a "monastic history" ... With the alleged Third Council, held under the auspices of Mogalliputta Tissa and Emperor Asoka, we reach the third phase of Buddhist historiography; the missions of Asoka, the transplantation of Buddhism to Southeast Asia, where now the *sangha's* and the doctrine's fate is embedded within a Buddhist polity capped by a Buddhist kingship... Thus "Buddhism as early monastic history" makes the passage in this third stage to "Buddhism in polity." No doubt subsequent "periodicizations" are possible in this Buddhist account of Buddhism's history, but what I wish to stress here is the dynamism of this world view' (Tambiah 1984:117-118).

devote as much as a third of their length to the Buddha's life before going on to treat the Buddhist Councils, and finally the contemporary royal or monastic history in Burma. Hence, the Buddha's hagiographies not only show, but participate in 'a remarkable view of the "historical" unfolding of Buddhism'. Tambiah's view is also inkeeping with the Burmese term for 'biography', which could actually also mean history of a lineage or institution.

The hagiographies of BK and the Ma-ha-si may therefore be seen as dots along this continuum between episode, life, lineage, and history.⁶¹ The Ma-ha-si hagiography was first published in the context of the ambitious *History of practice*, which strung together his hagiography with 186 brief hagiographies of his pupils who were teaching at meditation centres all over the country. As it said in the preface to this 'history': 'We have had to publish the *History of Ma-ha-si practice (Ma-ha-si pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na win)* only: in order that there be no possibility of hiding from Buddhists the Ma-ha-si's vigour in energetically achieving the brilliance of practical Buddhism (*pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na*) to reach as far as beyond Burma—such as Asia, America, and Europe, and in as much as it is the responsibility of present Buddhists to advance Buddhism (*ta-ya*) for the benefit of those who come later; and in order to establish and prolong practice Buddhism.' (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:vi)

If the Ma-ha-si hagiography was published at the head of many other hagiographies like a lineage to then become a separate hagiography, the BK tradition, on the other hand, had no such preceding separate 'lineage' record. It could therefore be argued that the BK hagiography serves not only as a hagiography in the narrow sense of recording someone's life, but as a hagiography in the widest sense of a description of his heritage amongst his pupils, which would concord with KL's reference to it as a 'mile pole in history'. This stylistic difference between the BK and the Ma-ha-si hagiographies is all encompassed within the total Burmese concept of biography which does not clearly distinguish between the life (or episode) of an individual and lineage history.

The hagiographies we looked at are equally concerned with the 'there and then' as with the 'here and now': they are concerned as much with the details of the lives of individual men, as

61 Hagiography not only develops from episode into life and its lineage, but also develops in the other direction, namely out of lineage into stories of life. Much modern Burmese biography has its 'roots' in the religious (*tha-tha-na win*) and secular chronicles (*ya-za win*), from which during the 20th century the biographies of famous monks and kings came to be composed retrospectively. The hagiographies of (U) Thi-la' and the Hitut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw, famous for their practice, appeared many decades after their lives ended, only after adherents of practice, becoming self-conscious of history and lineage of practice, pulled these subjects from their embeddedness in the chronicles. Hagiography thereby continuously recycles through unique constructions of continuity between life episodes into lives, between lives into lineages, and between lineages into a country's history, and the other way around. To the extent that history is about constructing sensible strands of continuity between biographical episodes, by means of which it extends the lives of teachers into their pupils' and of kings into their subjects' lives, hagiography is at the root of history. To the extent that contemporary hagiography is retrospectively recomposed from royal and monastic lineage histories, history is at the root of hagiography.

with establishing their legitimacy as teachers in the lineage of teachers. Ma-ha-si's hagiography in the 'history of practice' is closely linked to the official history of the BTNA (chapter 1), under which the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha falls, so that he nearly became the focal person in the lineage of the national independence dynasty as revolving around Prime Minister (U") Nu'. But with changes in the power structure since 1962 this story never did evolve. The BK hagiography sought to document both BK's life as well as his heritage in a single document, and I suggest that this explains why only 27 out of 600 pages of the hagiography was devoted directly to his life.

Conclusion

Hagiographical tradition is as much about an individual's life, as it is about the extension of that life into the lives of others. In order to make a life relevant to contemporary concerns documented are, apart from the life of the subject and his/her origins, also his/her spiritual legacy and subsequent lineage, which draws the hagiography towards the present. The Buddha's teachings are perpetuated in his teachings as embodied by the scriptures, in his relics (in pagodas and sacred sites), and in his community of disciples linked by ordination. But hagiography plays a special role here in that it makes these continuities explicit. And these biographical continuities proceed to have an impact on future continuities. When the Mo'hnyin Hsa-ya-daw was succeeded at death by A-shin Thu'min-ga-la, the analogy was made that this succession was, 'like the noble Buddha's *tha-tha-na* was guarded after his demise by a succession of holy ones (*ya-han"da*) such as Shin Ma-ha-ka'tha-pa' ' (Kaw"wi'da' 1971:477).

Tambiah put it that the process of elaboration of the Buddha's hagiography is about continuity comparable to the recreation of the sacred geography of Zam-bu-di-pa' in Burma and Thailand: 'enabling both the local oral specialists and authors to exercise their creative gifts and the local audiences to be convinced that the religious truths recounted had become manifest among themselves, and not in faraway places' (Tambiah 1984:129). Hagiography is about drawing close a historical life to reach across space and time. If this interest persists, not only will historical life episodes from diverse sources eventually be unified into biographical images, but will the story of life be transformed into a history of lineage, and from a history of lineage towards its incorporation into a full-scale religious and secular national history. Just as Buddhist hagiography thereby does not deal with a *single* biological entity constrained by the events of birth and death, but with strings of dispersed but notionally related events in numerous lives across space and time, so life is never quite at an end: the Buddha's hagiography is not yet at an end even today because his manifestations have not come to an end—there is one stage after his *hkan-da' neik-ban*, namely the final *da-tu' neik-ban*, which passes after the decline of religion when his relics will come together and subsequently disappear (expected to be about 2,500 years from

now). So, even if interpretation and rearrangement of the facts concerning an individual's life up until his enlightenment be finalised for once and for all, we have not yet fully captured all the undisclosed prior lives, nor the undisclosed episodes of the events between enlightenment and this future event. The Buddha's life literally 'envelops' history.

The hagiographies we have considered in this chapter are concerned to document continuity also, and seek to establish, in a sense, their own dynasties. In this chapter I have argued, building upon Reynold and Tambiah, that, once the interest in a person's life persists, this life becomes rewritten as the focal point for a dynasty of lives strung together in the form of multiply linked hagiographies called *tha-tha-na win*, possibly to become national histories. The BK and Ma-ha-si hagiographies we have considered are but different points along these continua. This is inkeeping with the range of meanings addressed by *at-htok-pat-ti*, the Burmese concept of 'biography'. But they are not at an end...

In Buddhist hagiography the subject is more important than whether the author's style of writing is acceptable or whether his knowledge of the subject is based on historically verifiable data. Indeed, the subject's importance comes to be drawn out into history. Traditional Burmese history is, as we have seen, largely 'subjectivised' in a biographical sense: the story begins with the hagiography of the Buddha and his lineage credentials, which is followed up with biographical episodes of his disciples and of the various kings. On the other hand, traditional Burmese hagiography is largely 'historicised', in that *biographies of individuals have* come to be drawn out into pupil lineages.

My conclusion to this chapter would not be complete without remarking that at least some of the categories in the fivefold opposition as described in the earlier chapters 1-6 have been unexpectedly reordered in this chapter.⁶² In chapter 2 I showed how foreigners and foreign religions were excluded from 'real' Buddhism (*bok-da'tha-tha-na*), which was taken up in chapter 4 on the novitiation ceremony with all its foreign Vedic elements: yet in the two hagiographies discussed in this chapter the foreigner is given an extremely prominent place in the description of practice itself. In chapter 3 I showed how 'practice' came to be emphasised as an emblem of identity of the meditator as against textual method, which was further elaborated in relation to the rules of the meditation centre regarding reading and writing and in the anthropological method of recording (chapter 5), and in the dismissal by meditation teachers of the conceptual approach of concentration meditators (chapter 6): yet in this chapter I demonstrated how teachers of practice are described as having a major concern with scriptural learning, interests

62 I am grateful to Prof. Charles Hallisey for drawing my attention to some of the points in this latter part of this chapter.

which were in turn textualised in hagiography and historical tradition. Also, in previous chapters (e.g. chapter 3) I have argued that a layperson can claim to be part of the monastic order of 'the ultimate truth' through practice, yet we have here seen in the BK hagiography how it is not just what one 'does' that counts, given that the BK hagiography sought to establish monastic acceptance of his methods.

In short, while the tradition of practice excludes the foreigner and text/scriptural learning/monastic lineage at one level, it incorporates it at yet another. If we take the ideas meditators express literally as I have tended to emphasise in the earlier chapters, we would exclude scriptural learning, the foreigner, and conventional ordination from practice. Yet if we are to understand them in a symbolic total and complex sense in the context of the hagiographies, we are faced with having to incorporate them within the context of traditions of practice.

This raises the question of *context* which is extremely important to anthropological description. Anthropologists of Buddhism have often typecast context in a structuralist way as being of a single binary opposition: the *context* of the field and its emphasis on the vernacular (the concern of the anthropologist), as opposed to *text* (the concern of the Indologist). But this is incomplete and does not allow for fluidity of the concepts under consideration. In describing fieldwork as if it were *purely contextual*, some anthropologists not only deny the textual-conceptual methods of their subjects, and oversimplify the concepts their subjects draw upon, but they forget that their own methodology is closely bound up with text. They have denied that text and context are inextricably bound up with each other: there is text in context, and there is context in text. Neither comes logically prior to the other. This will be the subject of chapter 8, the final and concluding chapter of this thesis.

On the dilemma of multiple 'texts' and 'contexts'¹

So far I have sought to describe the historical, institutional and biographical aspects of the Burmese traditions of Buddhist practice in terms of our five important conceptual oppositions first expounded in the introduction to this thesis: 'Buddhendom' vs 'Buddhism'; 'scriptural learning' vs 'practice'; 'ultimate truth' vs 'conventional truth'; 'meditation' vs 'morality/charity'; and between WM vs 'concentration'. I now wish to take further one of these five oppositions present throughout this thesis in order to make a point about the relationship between context and text: I shall look at the opposition between Buddhist practice and scriptural learning.

In this thesis I have argued, following Burmese Buddhist historians, not only that there has been a historical transformation from scriptural learning to practice in Burma in this century, but that this transformation goes on periodically throughout history starting from the time that the practice of the Buddha and his disciples were put in writing and came to be studied in Pali, down to the time that Burmese 20th century texts written about Burmese Buddhist meditation teachers came to be studied by contemporary Buddhists. Superimposed on this periodical transformation from practice to scriptural learning is the continuous transformation going on all the time between teacher and pupil in the form of explicit instructions—instructions which have to be interpreted and put into practice. Despite the selfconscious denial of the relationship of scriptural learning to practice in the narrow sense², there are many contexts where exponents of practice will draw on text. In the novitiation ceremony exponents of practice had only one way of arguing ^{that} music, spirits, etc. were not part of pure Buddhism, which was on the basis of the scriptures. Also, in order to justify the methodology of practice in the context of Buddhism as a whole, recourse had to be taken to text. Above all, text served to convey the traditions of practice historically and to communicate these across cultures. Practice, therefore, is

1 I am grateful to Prof. Charles Hallisey for his comments on a final draft of this chapter, in which he pointed out that texts have contexts too. In the light of his comments I have sharpened up the arguments about text and context in the introduction and the conclusion to this chapter, and altered some paragraphs in the main body.

2 i.e. Excluding the technical meaning of scriptural learning as verbal 'instruction'.

contextualised in texts of various kinds. These texts in turn have their own contexts, for they have been written at different times by different people on different subjects for different purposes under different circumstances (e.g. the censorship guidelines). Chapter 7 showed, how, despite selfconscious opposition to text in the ideal, practice has come to be contextualised in text in this way.

Many anthropologists have oversimplified this relationship between text and context. Adopting the somewhat simplistic model of context (anthropologist's concern) vs text (Indologist's concern), the text-context debate has been unnecessarily constrained to the level of what happens in the 'field' (people's belief and practice) as against the 'doctrinal' Buddhism (historical-doctrinal) as some unitary entity already understood in the west.

It is my opinion that permeating much of the anthropological literature is a disregard for the complexities in the context/text equation. The Burmese contexts relate themselves not just to one text, the Pali canon or its early commentaries, but also to multiple contemporary texts (such as biographies, etc). Such texts have their own contexts. Above all, however, the anthropological text/context opposition should be drawn out in scope to encompass the works of anthropologists themselves, where we find that the concept of 'context' is more 'textual' than the term suggests: not only was it developed selfconsciously against the textual methodology of the Indologist, but it was drawn largely from the texts of preceding scholars

Spiro, though he admitted that he was confused about the great latitude of meaning which meditation seemed to enjoy in Burma,³ relegated its practice to an inferior status within Burmese Buddhism as a whole. He wrote that 'meditation is found only infrequently in Burma' (1970:54). Yet when I went to Burma I found meditation centres thriving and bustling with meditators, and everywhere people were going to centres to meditate. How are we to explain this anomaly?

I can think of two possible answers to this question. First, it is possible that meditation was more popular in Burma during my 1981-82 fieldwork than during Spiro's 1961 fieldwork. But I doubt the difference is major, because the majority of meditation centres I visited were founded well in advance of Spiro's fieldwork.

The second answer, it seems to me, is more likely, and this has to do with the way we construct scholarly knowledge as the result of awareness of previous texts on the subject. Spiro went to Burma after reading Winston King's work, and he elaborated on King's views. When King first took sight of 'Buddhism in operation' during a visit to the Shwedagon Pagoda he expressed his feelings in terms of 'a kind of "culture shock"': 'So many shrines, all with their worshippers; and such devout worship of reverent kneeling, audibly fervent devotions, offerings of flowers,

3 See conclusion to chapter 6.

incense-sticks, and smaller paper umbrellas, washing of images, lighting of candles, and resounding gongs... for this neither my non-symbolic Protestant training, which I had naively imagined to be somewhat akin to the Buddhist practice of religion, nor my readings, had quite prepared me' (1964:48).

King made it quite clear that this 'cultural shock' was the product of the incompatibility of his reading on Buddhism with what he saw. He found that in real life 'that which was relegated in the books to footnotes and asides—the ritual, the mythical, the superstitious—seemed to occupy the centre of the stage so far as actual practice was concerned' (King 1964:47). He referred to the textual kind of Buddhism he was initially familiar with before going out to Burma as 'export Buddhism' or 'literary Buddhism', by which he meant to convey the selective nature of the translation of Buddhist texts by western scholars, which, though 'it cannot be called precisely a false or even distorted representation of Buddhism', nevertheless 'if the reader who takes it to be a comprehensive description of contemporary Buddhism, as many Westerners ... undoubtedly tend to do, it may become a false portrait. For there are many other elements besides these classic simplicities in living and breathing Buddhist practice'.

Spiro sought to elaborate King's discovery of this remarkable differential between textual and real-life Buddhism from an anthropological angle: 'unlike the conclusions which might have been deducted from textual Buddhism or books on Buddhism, anthropological studies of living Buddhism have shown that Buddhists differ very little from people in general' and he 'discovered that the doctrines of normative Buddhism only rarely constitute the Buddhism of the faithful' (p 11). According to Spiro, all humans are essentially the same in their needs and motivations, and most Burmese are less interested in true Buddhist doctrine and the pursuit of nibbana (nibbanic Buddhism), and hence meditation, than in improving their rebirths (kammatic Buddhism) and the fulfilment of their earthly needs. Live Buddhism, from being a footnote in the Indological interpretation, became the hub of the anthropological understanding, and the emphasis was, as we shall see later, how entirely different live Buddhism was from the preceding Indological textual type of Buddhism.

However, from my point of view Spiro's low regard of the place of meditation within Burmese Buddhism, the discussion of which was limited to a couple of passages and a couple of footnotes, simply did not reflect the current realities: over the last century Burmese Buddhists have increasingly come to be preoccupied with meditation, have institutionalised it, and have taken to it in big numbers. So I set it once again at the hub of Burmese Buddhism. Perhaps a future observer of Buddhism in Burma will come round to Spiro's views once again, and find that I have overemphasised the importance of the traditions of Buddhist practice in Burma.

Simply put, our descriptive framework is less objective than we hope. What we find is dictated in terms of the texts inherited by our predecessors. This determines the place we give things and it influences our subsequent arguments. Both, the anthropologist and the meditator are innovators to the extent that they sought to place themselves outside of texts inherited from the immediate past, and preferred to emphasise experience, context and practice. But this emphasis on context and practice is compromised by the inheritance of text and the enforced interaction with it. We must accept that lurking behind every context there are multiple texts, each with their own context.

The Burmese Buddhist practice/scriptural learning dilemma

Let me briefly review the practice/scriptural learning dilemma insofar as it has entered this thesis.

In the introduction we learnt how WM is bound up in three important texts, namely the Buddha's First Discourse or Discourse on the Wheel of the Dhamma (the *Da-ma'set-kya*), the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness (*Tha-di'pat-han" thok*), and in commentaries such as The Path of Purity (*Wi'thok-di mek*); these exist in Pali written in Burmese script, and have been translated into Burmese. I have argued that we must go beyond these texts in order to understand contemporary Buddhist practice in Burma, and have presented a constellation of Pali loanwords in terms of which exponents of Buddhist practice justify their beliefs.

Historically, the vocation of scholarship (*gan"da'du-ra*) had been emphasised more than the vocation of meditation (*wi'pat-tha-na du-ra*). Until the middle of the 19th century western observers, such as Sangermano, described Buddhist meditation as a linguistic technique of recitation, which could be interpreted as the consequence of these observers' lack of knowledge of Buddhist practice, or it could be that the Burmese indeed popularly identified meditation at the time with concept and text. We know that it was not until the third quarter of the 19th century that King Min"don" took an interest in meditation and requested his monks to write about meditation because he found traditional royal discipline too materialist in orientation ('like curry without salt'). But it was not until after the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw had taken to meditation in the forest when the foreigners annexed Upper Burma in 1887, and after he had taught his pupils during the first two decades of the 20th century, that meditational practice based on scriptural techniques and not just linguistic 'play', became truly popular. The opposition between practice and scriptural learning was transcended by government. The kings/politicians most interested in meditation—King Min"don" and U Nu—were also those who organised the Fifth and Sixth Synods aiming to purify the Buddhist Scriptures. Interestingly, the monks most famed for their meditation were also considered among the most erudite.

Chapter 2 looked at the issue of the intrusive foreigner, who, in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries had influenced the world of the Burmese Buddhist. With the introduction of the printing press into Burma in 1817, a freedom from memorisation was attained and Buddhism became accessible in multiple languages to everyone, including the unordained Buddhists and the foreigner. The foreigner was reputed to have remapped the Burmese language terms for Buddhism: the term 'Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha*) was allegedly introduced into popular Burmese usage by Baptist missionary Judson to ensure Buddhism common status with other religions. The terms for 'Buddhist' also came to involve the distinction between the ordained and the true practitioners as the core (*tha-tha-na-win*), with others being but 'within Buddhendom' (*bok-da'ba-tha-win*). The opposition here is not so much, as in the previous chapter, between practice and scriptural learning, but between practice and uncontrolled conceptualisation involved in culture, foreign education and science, and other religions.

If chapter 1 suggested that meditation was turned from text to practice at the end of the 19th century, chapter 3 showed how Burmese meditator-scholars actually held this transition to have taken place internal to Buddhism, and the way they conceived of it. In micro-time, the transition was understood as a one-off event: as the transition from a few isolated puddles of practice at the beginning of the Kon'baung period (1752-1885), to a roaring river of practice today. In macro-time a cyclical view of history was drawn upon which includes a two cycle of 5 times 500 years in which the scriptural learning period of 500 years is alternated by four periods of 500 years of WM, concentration, morality and charity. Both of these views counterposed practice as against scriptural learning. But this transition from scriptural learning to practice must be put into the context of a more continuous transformation. In the words of a meditation scholar, it was not until 'sleeping books' awoke and 'silent teachers' began to teach that practice came to flourish in Burma.

Once sleeping books were put into practice and teachers emerged, pupils also emerged, and a 'practice lineage' appeared, which, being based on meditative action rather than ordination, became a counterlineage to the purely monastic 'scriptural learning' lineage based on ordination. Practice and scriptural learning became synonyms for competing Buddhist traditions. The practice lineage was not just an alternative lineage, it was an alternative path to the same knowledge; it is possible for meditators to 'know' the scriptures without having studied them in any detail in the way the Sun'lun" was able to hold his own in debates with scholarly monks because of his knowledge derived from meditation. Today, meditators need no longer 'study' the scriptures; indeed, this is most often detrimental to their meditational success, and all they need do is to put into practice the teacher's instructions.

The scriptural learning/practice opposition provided a rich tradition of metaphors with which meditators could identify. Some metaphors use the same identifiers constructed in opposite ways as, for example, the cow/bull, owner/herder, and cream/milk metaphors: if some scholars argue that the cow can only guard practice by virtue of the bull (scriptural learning), meditators argue that the 'flavour' of cream (practice) is superior to that of milk (scriptural learning), and yet others that the young herders of cows (scriptural learning) only get to drink the milk where their owners (practice) get to drink the cream. Scriptural learning outlasts practice, and the analogy of the roots of the tree (permanent scriptural learning) supporting annual fruits (practice) is but one of many.

So continuous translation takes place between practice and scriptural learning: from the Buddha's practice to his utterances, from his utterances to the written scriptures, from the scriptures to practice, and, over the last century, from contemporary practice to contemporary practice literature. This continuous transformation and competition between the scriptural learning and practice traditions means that exponents of the practice tradition are always in a heightened state of sensitivity about conceptual method.

But to the meditator it was not *just* meditational practice which was of relevance; ordination, the initiation into scriptural learning, remained a crucial event. In chapter 4 some marked differences were noted between novitiation as performed in the meditation centre as compared to outside. In particular, there was a selfconscious redefinition of many Buddhist concepts such as 'merit' and 'charity', with an overall simplification of the ceremony without royal regalia, a master of ceremonies and its Brahmanic symbolism, supernatural invocations, and music; a much shorter ritual resulted which invoked fundamental meanings in the Scriptures for its existence where the non-meditator's novitiation invoked inherited custom. If in chapter 3 scriptural learning was, so to speak, an enemy of practice, because it occurred in the context of competition for historical identity, here, as in chapter 2, scriptural learning turned out to be a friend of practice, helping, by its unambiguous reference to the Buddha's time, to weed out from true practice the 'foreign' influence of other religions (Vedic ritual), and the inherited hodge podge of unorthodox influences.

Compared to the monastery where leisurely pace is possible, the allocation of resources to the single goal of practice is so tight in the meditation centre that there is no time spent answering irrelevant questions, developing friendships, etc. In chapter 5 it was noted how in the meditation centre speaking, reading, writing, or recording in picture or tape, were not relevant to practice; 20 hours a day meditation were. Here, once again, the process of conceptualisation was perceived to be in a relationship of enmity with practice. Nevertheless, the monk, and his

ordination based on scriptural learning, continued to reign supreme in the meditation centre and in the meditators' aspirations as reflected in the monastic vocabulary used.

The Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw pointed out confusion over meditation as concept versus meditation as actual practice. In chapter 6 an element of 'linguification' of meditation was found in the meditational practices of uneducated meditation practitioners. Drawn by the excitement of achieving a long life and power, and the many unusual experiences that accompany this type of meditation, some of these practitioners, though holding out WM as the ultimate meditational practice, found that concentration meditation (*tha-ma-hta*) met their needs. This orientation was particularly evident with (U") Lei", whose exploits in the WM centre led to a dispute with the teaching monks. Sometimes WM proper was attempted as a thinly disguised form of linguistic magic.

The practice vs scriptural debate reverberates in the lives of meditation teachers in different ways, as evident from the two biographies considered in chapter 7. Again, scriptural learning was shown to be a necessary distraction for the Ma-ha-si, because he had his duty to teach other monks. It was also part of his duty to move between learning scriptures, teaching, and actually doing practice. Ba' Hkin, on the other hand, being primarily a 'practical man', a man of practice only, had relatively little scriptural learning knowledge and sought to have his legitimacy as a meditation teacher endorsed by monks. But both were praised for the clarity with which they could explain practice 'free of scriptural sounds'. Despite the emphasis on atextuality, the biographies themselves represent the process of textualisation of the tradition of practice referred to earlier.

In sum, in this thesis I have described the tradition of practice in terms of spectrum of complex attitudes to text and scriptural learning. It was impossible to describe WM directly, and it had to take place under the more encompassing rubric of 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*) as against 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*) because this was its common denominator. Yet, though selfconscious about 'text' as an adversary, closer study showed how in the practice tradition it was also seen as a 'friend'. The context of practice is thus that it relates to multiple texts (e.g. the canon, contemporary biographies and other texts), each with their own contexts.

The anthropologist's context/text dilemma

If the meditator holds *practice* sacred, against which all forms of conceptualisation militate, in anthropology it is *context* that is held sacred, in which all extraneously derived data are, by definition regarded with some suspicion. The emphasis on participant-observation in fieldwork since the 1930s and on fluency in the vernacular made anthropology into such a discipline. As Scharfstein (1989:7) put it, anthropologists are, 'the creators of a serious, detailed, and embracing contextualism.... "serious" because in the study of context merely philosophical declarations

appear empty, "detailed" because conviction depends on the precise description of contextual ties, and "embracing" because only when inclusive does the study of context lend general insight and become a general difficulty.'

It would be foolish to open up the problem of context as a general philosophical problem too deeply in a conclusion to a thesis such as this. But I should like to nevertheless contribute to this debate in the following specific way. I have drawn together several strands in this thesis which show how Burmese Buddhist meditators, with their long history of written tradition, are also impressed with this dilemma. Not only is WM a phenomenon which transcends, even consciously defies, language, and its history is bound up with scriptural learning, its antithesis, but it is similarly present in the opposition with concentration meditation, which incorporates and thrives on language and concept under the castigating eye of the WM teacher. I now wish to describe how the context dilemma poses a similar problem in the history of observations of Buddhism: anthropology has explicitly proclaimed itself to be on the side of context, yet it is forced to take it up in language and text.

Doctrinal Buddhism and textual scholars

After considering the selfconscious description by WM *yaw"gi* of Buddhist history, it struck me how this in some ways resembles the anthropologist's selfconscious mode of description—both carve out a niche in the history of scholarship of Buddhism, and both have shifted the goal-posts of what constitutes 'authentic' knowledge, and the kind of methodology that can give rise to it. Let me briefly recount how western observation of Buddhism changed from an emphasis of text to context.

The earliest western information on Buddhism was recorded by travellers from 1435 AD onwards. Buddhism was considered a form of 'paganism', particularly during the early years of missionary activity in Burma from 1599. Eventually, the Buddha came to be approached through Hindu sources and identified with Vishnu, which eventually played a role in the two-Buddha theory. The Buddha's postulated origin ranged from Africa (because of his 'curly hair'), to Persia, Mongolia, and Egypt (Almond 1988).

Finally, from the 1850s onwards, with the shaping of Indological scholarship, Buddhism came to be understood as a coherent system of philosophy which can be studied through the Sanskrit and Pali texts. The questions Indologists asked were about the historical authenticity of the Buddha and the evolution of Buddhist schools, and Buddhism in this mode of scholarship was studied mainly through the medium of text and archaeological discovery. Almond (1988:12) summarised this development as a process of 'textualisation' of Buddhism. In Britain, during the early time of the Victorian period, popular knowledge of Buddhism in the west had come to be transformed in two periods. During the first period, which took place during the first four

decades of the nineteenth century, 'Buddhism was an object which was instanced and manifested "out there" in the Orient, in a spatial location geographically, culturally, and therefore imaginatively *other*' with the result that: 'Buddhism, as constructed in the West, made manageable that which was encountered in the East by travellers, diplomats, missionaries, soldiers, traders, and so on. Buddhism as a taxonomic object organized that which the Westerner confronted in an alien space, and in so doing made it less alien, less other. The locus of Buddhism was the Orient.'

During the first twenty-five years of the Victorian period there was another phase where, 'Originally existing "out there" in the Oriental *present*, Buddhism came to be determined as an object the primary location of which was the West, through the progressive collection, translation, and publication of its textual *past*', so that:

Buddhism, by 1860, had come to exist, not in the Orient, but in the Oriental libraries and institutes of the West, in its texts and manuscripts, at the desks of the Western savants who interpreted it. It had become a textual object, defined, classified, and interpreted through its own textuality. By the middle of the century, the Buddhism that existed 'out there' was beginning to be judged by a West that *alone* knew what Buddhism was, is, and ought to be. The essence of Buddhism came to be seen as expressed not 'out there' in the Orient, but in the West through the West's control of Buddhism's own textual past.'

But Almond stopped at the end of the Victorian period, when Buddhism was still text, leaving out the period in which: Buddhism became 'embraced' by western Buddhists, and Buddhism was returned to its context in the 'orient' by the anthropologist.

Anthropology and Buddhism

Anthropological descriptions of Buddhism are a relatively recent phenomenon dating from the 1970s. Spiro's *Buddhism and Society*, published in 1970, was widely hailed as the first monograph treating Buddhism comprehensively in the context of the daily lives of Buddhists, and showing variety of local beliefs and practices. Other scholars soon followed, producing village ethnographies of Buddhist peoples as well as monographs on Buddhism and society in countries such as Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand. The most notable of these were (in chronological order): Tambiah's *Spirit cults* (1970); Gombrich's *Precepts and practice* (1971); Bunnag's *Buddhist monk, Buddhist layman* (1973); Mendelson's *Sangha and the State in Burma* (1975); Terwiel's *Monks and magic* (1976); Tambiah's *World conquerer, world renouncer* (1976); Southwold's *Buddhism in life*

(1983); Carrithers' *The forest monks of Sri Lanka* (1983); Tambiah's *The Buddhist saints of the forest and the cult of the amulets* (1984)⁴

We may characterise the anthropology of Buddhism, along with works by certain recent Buddhologists⁵, scholars of politics⁶, and comparative religionists⁷, as having a particular interest in contemporary Buddhism. Here the native rather than the Pali-Sanskrit textual scholar is the authentic source of knowledge. Indeed, Gombrich (1972:483) went as far as referring to 1970, the year of publication of Spiro's book, as 'the most important year for Theravada Buddhist studies since 1881': the Pali Text Society was founded in 1881. With Spiro's work and subsequent ethnographies, the Buddhist scriptural tradition came to be understood as but one part of a much larger religiocultural complex which is extremely varied. The sub-title of Spiro's book expresses this as 'a great tradition and its Burmese vicissitudes'; ancient doctrine versus the variety of contemporary Burmese beliefs.

This split western academic scholarship of Buddhism dramatically in two, for there are serious differences in opinion between this—let us call it Buddhism-in-life—and the foregoing Indological doctrinal perspective of scholarship. This difference is fundamental to understanding the ethnography of Buddhism as a separate genre of literature. Just as the Indological historical-doctrinal perspective itself required to be understood against the background of the *ad hoc speculations* about Buddhism by travellers, missionaries, and colonial civil servants, and many of the observations by modern western converts to Buddhism ('embracers') require to be understood against the background of *personally uncommitted* Indological scholarship of Buddhism, so the ethnography of Buddhism set itself off against the *textual orientation* of Indological scholarship. It positioned itself initially in cautious deference. Spiro (1970:3) wrote that 'the anthropologist takes off where the textual and historical scholar ends, for the anthropologist is not concerned with religious texts per se, but with the interaction between the doctrines found in these texts and conceptions found in the heads of religious devotees, and consequently, with the relation between these religious conceptions and the general ordering of social and cultural life'. But the tone in some later works took the form of boastful defiance, almost ridicule, as in Tambiah's (1984:7) book, when he wrote of the 'Pali Text Society mentality', which formulated 'unsullied Buddhist principles' about early Buddhism in

4 Gombrich's *Theravada Buddhism: a social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo* (1988) is primarily historical and does not comfortably fit into the above range of works.

5 For example, Bechert (1966, 1967, 1973), whose work addressed the question of the nature of 'modernist Buddhism' in South East Asia; Smith (1965), when he addressed the question of the relationship between Buddhism and the politics of post-Independence Burma.

6 For example, Sarkisyanz (1965), when he addressed the relationship between Buddhism and the Burmese revolution.

7 For example, the comparative religionist King (1964, 1980), when he addressed the question of meditation and modern forms of Buddhism in Burma.

India, to then 'after an imaginary leap in time and space ...see distortions and deviations in popular religiosity in Burma or some such outlying region'.

Spiro's work may have been hailed as the first monograph size contribution to the ethnography of Buddhism, but he was not the first to have advocated such a perspective on the subject. King was already concerned with the unique nature of Burmese Buddhist belief and practice six years before Spiro, with his *A Thousand Lives Away* (1964). Indeed, Spiro's formulation of kammatic Buddhism, as the 'average' Buddhism of the Burmese based on charity and merit making, as opposed to normative Buddhism, based on meditation and scriptural learning, was largely derived from King's work (see Spiro 1970:12).⁸

We have already noted at the beginning of this chapter how King developed his perspective; the way he was shocked when he saw live Buddhism at the Shwedagon pagoda, which he had not expected from the texts he had read about Buddhism. A year later, Leach (1968:1-3) observed that the 'Western interpretation of Buddhism has, until very recently, been derived almost exclusively from a scholarly study of the ancient Pali texts glossed by the modern commentaries of professional Buddhist theologians; very little attention has been paid to the ordinary practice of Buddhism in the parishes of its indigenous homeland...'. He proceeded to make the distinction between 'doctrine' and 'practical religion', where the former represents the work done on the canonical literature and commentaries, while the latter is concerned 'with the life here and now', and which Leach understood in the context of Levi-Strauss' notion of *sauvage*, 'the ordering of categories in all unsophisticated forms of human thinking'.

It was this growing awareness during the late 1960s that Buddhism was something alive, something more than the dry scholarly texts, which preceded the development of this tradition of Buddhist ethnography. Tambiah's (1970:2,3) work, following Spiro's within the year, continued this tradition: 'It is right and proper for the anthropologist to assert that his first and foremost task is to understand it in terms of the subjects' own intellectual, moral and affective categories' and, with reference to Indology and textual scholarship, 'insufficient regard was paid to the fact that the great literary religious tradition is itself varied and has been both cumulative and changing; secondly, it has for some curious reason not been seen that contemporary religion, even that observed in the village, incorporates a great deal of literary tradition'. This theme has been stated far more boldly in his later work, where he said: 'This book aspires to illustrate several passages—from history to anthropology, from text to context, and from Indology to anthropology' (Tambiah 1984:7).

Ethnography is a powerful modern form of knowledge of Buddhism because: a) it is scholarly (as opposed to the unsystematic observations of the traveller); b) it seeks to be objective (as opposed to the value judgments of the colonial civil servant and the missionary who had to justify their residence in the country among Buddhists); and c) it is derived from the study of the context of practice by native Buddhists (as opposed to the study of doctrine in the abstract by the Indologist), which is explained in its variety without judging one more 'pure' than another.

In this way, fieldwork took over from textual scholarship as the appropriate methodology of study, and the local vernacular took over from Pali or Sanskrit as a qualification for becoming a scholar of Buddhism. Variations in schools are no longer considered "deviations" from some pristine form of faith' which puzzled the early Indologists, but many scholars discovered that 'they simply do not know whether Buddhism was originally a popular cult or the spiritual philosophy of a religious virtuoso that only later became the religion of the common man' (Kitagawa 1980).

New discoveries give way to new scholarship, until these discoveries become known only through scholarship. Then liberation comes through the rediscovery of practical experience, in order to become known eventually through scholarship again—the start of a new cycle. The cycle applies equally to the meditator and to the ethnographic scholar. A hundred years ago there would be few unlearned monks in Burma, such as the Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw, who entered into debate with learned scholars, and who could afford to publicly claim to 'know' Buddhism through meditation irrespective of his lack of knowledge of the scriptures: the meditator has rescued Buddhist experience from the claws of Buddhist scholarship, and turned the tide towards a Buddhism based on immediate experience. Similarly, 30 years ago no Indologist would have been as bold as Southwold, in saying that if the Vinaya was not observed by Buddhists then the Vinaya was not Buddhism, and so in the tradition of western scholarship anthropology has played its role in rescuing the study of contemporary Buddhist experience from inherited western traditions of scholarship, turning the tide in western opinion towards a legitimization of different types of Buddhist experience as opposed to a view of these as syncretistic deviations from an ideal past.

But both have themselves participated in reversing the swing of the textual pendulum. The twentieth-century Buddhist meditators have made intensive scholarly study of the experiences of forefather teachers, culminating in a vast literature based on the 'tradition of practice'; and the contemporary anthropologist has contributed to a large body of ethnographic literature on forms of local Buddhism. Both have, so to say, become increasingly 'bookish'. As we shall see, the ethnography of Buddhism is more textual than it cares to admit.

The proliferation of Buddhisms

As already noted, anthropologists have used a different methodology to describe Buddhism from the preceding Buddhologists. They have thereby also selfconsciously sought to create their own identity in terms of the text/context distinction in a way not unsimilar to the opposition to scriptural learning by the WM *yaw"gi*. This led to a number of generalisations about types of religion and, in particular, different types of Buddhism.

Leach, in his introduction to *Dialectic in practical religion* (1968:1), distinguished between 'philosophical' and 'practical' religion, of which he said that 'a failure to take into account this distinction... has often led to grave misunderstanding', the first being the common western way of interpreting Buddhism as a monastic system of renunciation, while the second 'has to do with the "here and now"'. He proceeded to argue that 'among "civilized" practical people the distinction between primitive and sophisticated largely disappears'. Similarly Gombrich (1971:4) wrote, 'the distinctions I ... use throughout this book, are between what people say they believe and say they do, and what they really believe and really do'. He referred to these as 'cognitive' and 'affective' religion. And so 'for the Sinhalese the Buddha is cognitively human but affectively divine' (ibid:9), and later on he referred to these as 'world denying' and 'world affirming' respectively (ibid:322). Also, Southwold (1983:6) noted, 'the fundamental error in the study of Buddhism has been to approach it from the side of belief, doctrine, rather than practice'. Spiro posed this as 'the relationship between the real and ideal, the actual and doctrinal, the existential and normative, dimensions of belief' (1970:5).

In part, this all-pervasive distinction between text and context was a reaction against the form the scholarship Buddhism had taken during the previous century. In part it must be understood in the context of developments within the anthropological discipline itself, with the separation in post-functionalist thought between the emic and etic, and the 'ideal' and 'actual'. But one crucial consequence of the shift in the focus of study of Buddhism from 'text' to 'experience' led to many varieties of Buddhism being recognised as legitimate and worthy of study. And, with the increased numbers of such specific ethnographies of Buddhism, it is now possible to speak of *Thai*, *Burmese*, and *Sinhalese* Buddhism, etc.⁹

In the course of the youthful history of the ethnography of Buddhism, scholars have found names for different 'types' of Buddhism. A complete list would be too long, but here follow a few. Spiro (1970:12) found that, 'Buddhism is best viewed as comprising not one, but three

9 This is not to say that there were no distinctions by Indological scholars between different types of Theravada Buddhism. For example, Bode (1909:1) saw Burmese as quite different from Sinhalese Buddhism: 'Among the countries in which the ideas and traditions of Buddhism are inseparably bound up with the Pali canon Burma possesses a special interest which we hardly feel in the case of Ceylon, for Burma shows how the leaven of Indian thought worked in a race and idiom having none of the close relationship with India which we recognize in all that is most characteristic of the literature of Ceylon ...'

separate if interlocking systems: two soteriological systems ... and one non soteriological system ... apotropaic, ... nibbanic and kammatic Buddhism ...', where 'we might conclude that nibbanic Buddhism is the religion of a world-weary elite ... that kammatic Buddhism is the religion of a pre-industrial peasantry, and that apotropaic Buddhism is the religion of a rising and prosperous bourgeoisie' (Spiro 1970:468). However, Spiro's typology, with all its subdivisions, ultimately proliferates into no less than seven types of Buddhism: millennial, apotropaic, eschatological, esoteric, kammatic, nibbanic, and normative. Southwold (1983) does better, distinguishing between at least thirteen types (actual or empirical, authentic, early, literary, meditation, middle-class, ministry, nibbanic, philosophical, practical, rhinoceros, 'true', and village Buddhism), while elsewhere Southwold (1980) distinguished between Elite or Modern and Village Buddhism. Terwiel (1976:5) is modest, distinguishing within Thai Buddhism between 'syncretist Buddhism' of the lower income earners 'in which the animistic worldview prevails and Buddhist concepts and beliefs are incorporated in magico-animism', and 'compartmentalized Buddhism' of the urban upper ranks, where 'Buddha's teachings are considered superior to beliefs and practices which are obviously animistic'.

Mendelson (1975:30), on the other hand, preferred the continuum over the typological approach, and distinguished between orthodox and messianic Buddhism, where 'Burmese Buddhism is a complex creation, composed at the very least of three strands: (1) Theravada Buddhism proper; (2) a complex of beliefs and ritual I have called "Messianic Buddhism"; and (3) the world of nats ... "animism", or spirit world'. Similarly, Ferguson (1975:7), co-editor of Mendelson's book, noted in his thesis that 'Theravada Buddhism is best understood as a syncretistic continuum of a wide range of beliefs and practice that incorporates animism, magic, astrology, alchemy, messianic elements, Vedic lore, Bodhisatta concepts, arahant cults, Mahayanist philosophy, and a host of other variations which are all integrated into one system which is the Theravada Buddhist religion'.

While the Indologists had worked towards reconstructing the unique historical contexts from the inherited Buddhist texts, in the anthropology of Buddhism there was a concern to explain the varied contemporary contexts of Buddhism which resulted in an immense proliferation of types of Buddhism. Sometimes this goes so far that Buddhism is purported to be 'whoever believes what, where, when, and how of Buddhists'. For example, Southwold (1983:9) expressed the view that the canonical Vinaya rules are not Buddhist if they are not put into practice, so that Buddhism is no longer *Buddhism*. Of course, if canonical texts are not immediately relevant to a Buddhist explanation, then these should not be drawn upon to explain the Buddhism of that context. But to argue that Buddhist texts are no longer Buddhism should alert ethnographers to the bind they are in when they attempt to describe Buddhism in its infinite manifestations. Have

we really come to grips with the text-context dilemma?¹⁰ Scharfstein's (1989:61) coastal measurement paradox aptly summarises this dilemma. This says that if measurements become ever more precise, the coastline threatens to grow in length until immeasurably long.¹¹ The result is that, 'the further we regress into conditions and conditions of conditions, the more pedantic, more slow-moving we become, and the greater the threat that all intellectual motion will cease'. Context, then, is 'a patch of firm ground on which to stand; but it lies in the middle of a swamp of uncertainty' (Scharfstein 1989:59). For if there is no way of grasping context without representation, which seriously affects our conclusions, how are we to grasp context?

Ambiguity of text

Indologists studied the historical contexts of particular Buddhist texts; they used these to understand the historical development of Buddhism and meticulously sought to weed out the original earliest texts from the later ones. However, the ethnographer's central concern is to explain contemporary context, not through text, but in terms that are true to contemporary practice. These understandings are often at variance with the Buddhist texts which cannot explain them. The central theoretical distinctions running through the anthropology of Buddhism, from its inception in the late 1960's until the present, have been largely a rephrasing of the text-context debate without substantially adding to it.

One major problem is that the anthropologist's categories of explanation have not, for the most part, been drawn from contemporary context; they are only partly derived from fieldwork, but more often from text— from published studies in psychology, and comparative religion. Thus, 'kammatic Buddhism' and 'ribbanic Buddhism', two of Spiro's categories which would appear to have something to do with native categories of thought, were borrowed from King and are not concepts explicitly recognised by practising Burman Buddhists.

More important, much of the explanatory framework and the categories used by anthropologists to explain Buddhism of a particular region, are somewhat uncritically derived from preceding Indologists and ethnographers working in different regions. The doctrinal meaning of the doctrine/practice equation in specific Buddhist communities has mostly been equated with the answers provided by Indological research.

The ethnographer's categories of Buddhism are often a simple-minded adaptation of the Indological textual-historical question about Buddhism with the Indologist's work being a

10 KN pointed out, somewhat amused, that such anthropologists resemble the six blind Brahmins attempting to describe an object unseen (an elephant): one feels the tail and says it is a snake, one feels a foot and thinks it a stand, one feels the body and thinks it a wall, and another feels the trunk, and thinks it a spear... etc.

11 Scharfstein: 'Measuring is by means of conventions that experience has dictated; but if, in defiance of the conventions, one tries, in thought or practice, to measure a coastline very exactly and therefore measures not only the smaller protrusions and indentions, but *their* protrusions and indentions, and the protrusions and indentions of the protrusions and indentions, the coastline grows in length until it threatens to become immeasurably long.'

departure point for ethnography. As pointed out already in chapter 2 and the note on Pali loanwords, both Tambiah and Spiro have in this way adopted the Pali romanised terms for Thai and Burmese loanwords, thus signposting their lack of concern with contextual meaning of these terms in the vernacular itself.

Some scholars, such as Spiro, admit this freely when they say that 'normative Buddhism', is 'the doctrines contained in the Theravada Canon', and Burmese Buddhism is 'a compromise between the requirements of normative Buddhism and the demands of Burmese personality' (1970:6,28).¹² Yet the degree to which Burmese 'personality' was capable of influencing Burmese Buddhism was never great, for Spiro concluded that Burmese Buddhism, though ethnographically distinct from the Buddhism in other Theravada countries and from the canonical texts as he understood them, in reality does not vary so much from place to place. And so we find that 'its Burmese garb differs from its Thai or Sinhalese garb in only minor ways', and that 'the subtitle of this book might just as well have referred to its "historical vicissitudes"' (Spiro 1970:16).

This approach belittles the emphasis on context that is such an important part of anthropology, and Spiro has been criticised for this by Tambiah (1970:40-41):

Some analysts may take as their point of reference the postulates of doctrinal Buddhism as the essence and reality of Buddhism, and therefore also the base line for studying popular Buddhism. This orientation dictates its methodology and shapes the final conclusions, for the analysis accordingly seeks to see how "non-doctrinal" facts are adapted, modified and rationalized in relation to the "doctrinal" ideas. The question is thus prejudged.

A discrepancy is thus apparent between the claim to explain Buddhism in its variety as it exists today irrespective of text, and harking back to the meaning of contemporary Buddhism through the texts of Indologists, comparative religion scholars, and anthropologists. This double-edged use of the text/context relationship is therefore not just in the world of the Buddhists as described in the first part of this chapter, but in the ethnography of Buddhism itself. The anthropologist's ideal of understanding context (i.e. the contemporary localised Buddhism unmediated by text) is compromised by the inevitability of the scholarly and textual nature of their questions, their methodology, and their answers.

Even Tambiah, who is among the fiercest critics of the textual-historical Indological approach and of scholars such as Spiro, who sought for the meaning of 'normative doctrine' in Indological texts, has blatantly reintroduced the Indological texts through the backdoor when he uses them as key points of departure. For example, Tambiah (1976:5) reintroduced covertly the textual-historical approach to Buddhism when he noted how 'the major fact I had to come to

¹² Spiro does not mention 'dogma' anywhere. If we understand doctrine to mean 'allowable interpretations', and dogma a distillation of this to mean 'essential teaching' (e.g. Holy Trinity, etc.), Spiro conflates dogma and 'doctrine', but understands doctrine as a single entity of prescribed meaning, giving it more uniformity and permanence than it really has.

terms with was that the best possible account of twentieth century relations between Thai Buddhism and Thai polity and society must at one end moor itself to a central conception between Buddhism and polity predicated in early Buddhism', and so 'although the primary focus would be the nexus among religion, sangha, and polity in contemporary Thailand (Part Two), I had to work toward its present contours from an initial position with early Buddhism (Part One)'. The early Buddhism he referred to was taken from the work produced within the Pali Text Society mentality he so fiercely denounced in his 1984 work.

How methodologically sound is it to claim at the outset that ethnography is contextual, yet to anchor such ethnography in the ancient text by western Buddhologists? The ethnographer has accepted the Indologist where it suits, at points where the hand needs to be held in guidance as to the question of complex Buddhist concepts and theoretical propositions about Buddhism, but rejects the Indologist where it does not. Ethnographers of Buddhism have come to the limits of implementing their methodology; while aiming to discover Buddhism in its contextuality and variety, the way is lost in this jungle of sophisticated terminology and boundless religious history.

The Ma-ha-si suggested that WM is a knowledge which is *actually* your own making, which contrasts with most other types of knowledge on earth: 'most followers of various religious faiths in the world are dependent on others in the matter of their beliefs, being ignorant about them themselves'. The anthropologists, in spite of the laudable ideal of 'going out there' and 'getting at the truths' by studying the real lives of real people, have evidently depended on third parties for the description of Buddhist practice. Our knowledge has still, for the most part, become ours by unquestioned acceptance, not by personal discovery. In this respect we are like those, as the Ma-ha-si put it, who 'worship the deities of trees, forests and mountains because the practice has been handed down from generation to generation by ancestors of the family', with the result that 'no one has the personal knowledge of these objects of worship'. Anthropologists, in the aim to describe contextual knowledge, have largely done so in the very terms inherited from their preceding generations of scholars (Indological and other): 'they are dependent on the elders, parents and teachers in the matter of their beliefs' (Ma-ha-si 1981c:295).

It should be pointed out that texts have multiple contexts, and that there is no single incontrovertible way of understanding them. Buddhology is still developing its knowledge. Our present understanding of Buddhism is derived from the English translations of a large body of Pali manuscripts mainly taken from Sri Lanka. It has recently been suggested by some Pali scholars (e.g. Norman) that some original manuscripts exist in Thailand which are older than the Sri Lankan manuscripts. Certainly, the manuscripts upon which most contemporary

understanding of Buddhism in the west is based should not be taken as the final authoritative statement of early Buddhism; 'Buddhology' is still to evolve. Other manuscripts may still evoke a totally different sense of Buddhism as a historical phenomenon. Second, it is important to point out that, even if Buddhologists were unanimously to agree on the historical context of the texts, this is not to say that *Buddhist* scholars will share this view. Surely, for the sake of consistency Tambiah should explain Thai Buddhism by texts which are more directly related to the context he seeks to explain? Why not in terms of Thai 'Buddhology' and its commentaries on the scriptures and contemporary Thai Buddhist literature?

But we must now go beyond the matter of how anthropologists inherited the texts from the Indologist, textualised their discipline, and adopted textual methods. The question is whether it possible to describe true context at all without recourse to text: can we describe true beliefs, true experiences of people that way? There is another problem besides the way fieldwork involves the use of diaries and notes for later interpretation, where the anthropologist comes up against the same problems of historical continuity of unwritten knowledge. However exceptional the anthropologists' grasp of the vernacular language and however profound their fieldwork experiences may be, somehow an imperceptible transformation takes place between the events perceived in the field and their analysis and description. Remaining unaware of the limits inherent in participant-observation (for they have no need to make themselves a permanent position within the society), so Bourdieu (1977:1-5) argues, 'the anthropologist is condemned to adopt unwittingly for his own use the representation of action which is forced on agents or groups when they lack practical mastery of a highly valued competence and have to provide themselves with an explicit and at least semi-formalized substitute for it in the form of a *repertoire of rules*'. With the inclination 'to a hermeneutic representation of practices' all social relations are reduced to the process of decoding communicative relations. The anthropologist, as listener, 'is on the side of language' where the active speaker/performer is on the side of 'action and expression'. Such transformed, let us call 'mediate' (as opposed to the attribute of 'immediacy' which the unobjectified events possess), views of practice allow the event, the practice, to be represented in some rule or textual passage. This in turn allows us to slide comfortably into an analytical discourse of 'roles' and 'maps' of culture, to eventually degenerate into the textual criticism characteristic of the scholarly journal. Knowledge does not merely depend on the particular standpoint of an observer 'situated in time and space', but the 'knowing subject inflicts on practice a much more precious alteration... he constitutes practical activity as an *object of observation and analysis, a representation*' [his emphasis]. Bourdieu urges us to 'question the presuppositions inherent in the position of an outside observer, who, in his preoccupation

with interpreting practices, is included to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object'.

Conclusion

The scriptural-learning vs practice tension has been presented as the 'global' opposition within which the WM exponents could locate themselves internal to Buddhism. This concluding chapter sought to 'universalise' the problem and to show it as a problem not unique to the Burmese Buddhist practice traditions, but pervasive in western scholarship of Buddhism also.

I do not delude myself that this thesis has ever come close to having described context *immediately*. There is little we can do about the Bourdieu 'objectification' problem, short of bringing forward practitioners of Buddhism to describe their own traditions. And even then there will be difficulties.

But the problem of the way anthropologists have coped with Indological heritage and their subconscious use of text, is a problem that *can* be transcended. In conclusion to this chapter, I hope I am not just seen to play a 'clever' inversion on anthropology by arguing that in spite of their emphasis on *context outside of text*, the anthropologists have shown themselves remarkably preoccupied with text in their questions, methodology, and their answers, even to the extent of locating the meaning of context in text. I now see that there is a way of transcending the simplistic opposition between context and text which seems to have pervaded so much of the anthropology of Buddhism. We must come to accept that, just as *every text has multiple contexts*, so *every context has multiple texts*¹³: the Indologist and historian are concerned with the former because they depart from given texts in order to reconstruct an unknown context in the past, and the anthropologist is concerned with the latter because they depart from given contexts and try to explain it with the aid of text. In anthropology of Buddhism, texts have their own quality without which our equation of context is incomplete, and context should not just be used as a simple-minded opposition to the textuality of the Indologists. Each fieldwork context relates to multiple texts (the anthropologist's and the people studied).

To indicate how we might go beyond paying lip-service to context as merely a counter-weight to text, I suggest we must start breaking up our sense of context and achieve a better understanding of what types there are. Scharfstein (1989:62-6) suggested that we break down context 'in order to bear systematic examination'. He distinguished between five levels of context which, though phrased in terms of studies of text, is applicable to the anthropologist's sense of context also¹⁴.

13 I am grateful to Charles Hallisey for pointing out this compact notion.

14 As I have shown above, the anthropologist's sense of context is largely derived from text.

- i) *Correlative context* is the one we turn to instinctively, including the book in which a reference occurred, the text(s) on which it draws or to which it was responding, and the author's other writings.
- ii) *Microcontext* is about more 'minute scrutiny, sentence by sentence and concept by concept' which reverberates with the personal context which gives the words their personal resonance and style: the things said as contrasted with the implied. This is the stuff detailed commentaries and philological excursions are intended to elicit. It is highly personal.
- iii) *Macrocontext* deals with disputes between schools to which the text is relevant and the cultural conditions it reflects. They are impersonal and inclusive so that philosophy of a particular period can be studied through ideas about education, etc.
- iv) *Meta-context* deals with the text 'from above', asking why the kind of questions the text deals with are raised at all, or why it argues the way it does.
- v) *Universal or meta-metacontext* is about joining all the other, partial contexts and setting them in their relationships to one another, so as to make visible the full intellectual universe of the text.

It seems to me that in anthropology of Buddhism hitherto, we have tended to describe the meta- and universal context of particular types of contemporary Buddhism without describing sufficiently the correlative- and micro- contexts as they relate to the specific contexts encountered. Indeed, the meta- and universal context has mostly been described by means of the microcontext of the Indologists, forgetting that that these related to different questions. So there is an urgent need for more correlative-, micro- and macro-contextual studies of contemporary Buddhist schools of thought before we address the wider questions.

Second, and this flows from the above, we must get away from the 'Pali trap' which misleads people into believing that Pali loanwords have 'universal' meanings even across vernaculars. The anthropologist's treatment of Pali loanwords in the vernacular is symptomatic of their textual orientation; they have used the Indologist's romanised spelling in preference to treating the words as part of the vernacular language. Unfamiliarity with context has been sacrificed for familiarity with text. In my note on Pali loanwords in Burmese I pointed out my reasons for adopting the 'contextual' type of spelling by means of transcription (based on sound) from the vernacular, instead of the more usual 'textual' type of spelling adopted by most scholars of Buddhism (i.e. by means of our romanised Pali). We have seen in chapter 2 how a compound Pali loanword has come to constitute a new Burmese term for 'Buddhism' and 'Buddhist' incomprehensible to non-Burmese Buddhists, and other points of difference have been noted throughout the thesis. To pay attention to this wide latitude of vernacular meanings of the Pali

loanwords rather than accepting Rhys David's dictionary meanings, will go a long way towards a better understanding of micro-contextual Buddhism.

Third, we must work to build up a picture from contemporary Burmese vernacular texts and not solely rely on the English translations from the Pali Text Society. Modern Theravada Buddhists are prolific writers, and I have sampled a fair variety of these in the various chapters and appendices of this thesis. But of course I am merely making a statement in support of the trend that anthropologists of Buddhism to take this literature into account. Contemporary texts are increasingly brought into anthropological study. The reintroduction of text as a local expression of Buddhism becomes more prominent as we progress historically through the themes of ethnographic writing. The work of Tambiah may be taken as an example. His first ethnography focused on traditional village Buddhism (Tambiah 1971) which relies almost entirely on the western translations of the Pali canon and local oral statements, without paying any attention to sources written in the vernacular. His later study (Tambiah 1976) focused on urban Buddhism, where he began to refer to a number of vernacular sources, though largely of a historical nature. It is not until the 1980s, when Tambiah focuses on the biographies of forest monks and other figures locally prominent in their ascetic and meditational activities that we find the analysis of contemporary hagiographical texts making its entry into ethnography of Buddhism. It is as if, with the lifting of ethnography out of the limited context of the village and the city, Buddhism is once more firmly rooted back into text, though this time of a contemporary kind.

Tambiah (1976:6) (The Sanskrit) objectification -- an example of fruitful tension between Indic and local. The tension consists of a unity that phenomena & their particularity --

Bibliography

Note:

1. REFERENCES to prefaces and forewords have been given in transcription of the Burmese alphabet according to the original page references in Burmese (i.e. ka', hka', ga'.. sa', hsa', ...).
2. ERAS - Books give the date of publication in one or more of three eras. Where only Burmese dates were given as the publication date, I added 638 years to the Burmese date given in the bibliography in brackets.
 - i) according to the 'Buddhist Era' (*Tha-tha-na-daw thek-ka-yit*, hence abbrev. as BudE) counted from the time of the demise of the Buddha (over 2,500 years ago);
 - ii) according to the Burmese 'Current Era' (*Kaw"za thek-ka-yit*, henceforth abbrev. as BurE) dating from the year Pok-pa" Saw"ra'han" ascended the throne of Pagan in 639 A.D. (see HMY 1:215-216).
 - iii) according to our Gregorian Calendar. To convert from BurE to the Gregorian calendar add 638 years to BurE. To convert from the BudE to the Gregorian era, subtract 544 years from the BudE.

Abbreviations

BPA - Burma Pitaka Association

BTNA - Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe'gyok

HMY - Hman-nan" ma-ha-ya-za-win

MAA - Myan-ma a-bi'dan a-kyin"gyok

MSK - Myan-ma' swe-zon kyan"

NBTA - Naing-ngan-daw Bok-da'ba-tha Tha-tha-na A-hpwe'

TUH - Tha-tha-na-yei" U"si" Hta-na'

TW - Tha-tha-na Wi'thok-di' (1977)

To convert from BudE to BurE subtract 1182

	BudE	BurE	GregE
BudE	—	-1182	-544
BurE	+1182	—	+638
GregE	+544	-638	—

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End-notes on selected subjects

These notes serve to provide more information on selected subjects. They are in alphabetical order and are cross-referenced in the main chapters.

A-NA-GAN

The 'never-returner' (*a-na-gan*) 'is absolutely free from sensuous *kāmarāga* [craving] and *byāpāda* [ill-will] and will never be reborn in the world of human beings or of devas but only in the Brahma World of Form and Formless sphere from which he will attain *Nibbāna* after becoming an *Arahat*' (Ma-ha-sī 1980a:48-9).

A-PA'DAN

A-pa'dan is the early term for 'biography' rather than the contemporary *at-htok-pat-ti*'. This was claimed by Hla' Tha-mein (1961:nyā'), who argued that in the early history of Buddhism only *hteī-na-pa'dan*, *a-pa'dan*, or *a-pa'da-na* were used for events pertaining to the Buddha and his disciples.

It is the title of the 13th division of the *Hku'da-ka' ni'ke*, where it:

is a biographical work containing the life stories (past and present) of the Buddha and his *Arahat* disciples. It is divided into two divisions: the *Therapadana* giving the life stories of the Buddha, of forty-one Paccekabuddhas and of five hundred and fifty-nine *Arahats* from the Venerable Sariputta to the Venerable Ratthapala; and *Theripadana* with the life stories of forty *theri* *Arahats* from Sumedha *Theri* to Pesala *Theri*. (Ko Lei" 1986:136)

In this context its meaning is given as:

a biography or a life story of a particularly accomplished person, who has made a firm resolution to strive for the goal he desires, and who has ultimately achieved his goal, namely, Buddhahood for an Enlightened One, *Arahatship* for his disciples. Whereas the *Thera Gatha* and the *Theri Gatha* depict generally the triumphant moment of achievements of the *theras* and *theris*, the *Apadana* describes the uphill work they have to undertake to reach the summit of their ambition. The *Gathas* and the *Apadanas* supplement one another to unfold the inspiring tales of hard struggles and final conquests. (Ko Lei" 1986:136)

According to Hla' Tha-mein (1961:za'-nyā') it was only later that *at-htok-pat-ti*' gained currency, and came to be used in compound references such as: for Buddhas (*Bok-dok-pat-ti*); for monks (*Thaī-gok-pat-ti* or *Htei-rok-pat-ti*); for novices (*Tha'na-nok-pat-ti*); for 'humans' (*lu*), (*Za-nok-pat-ti*); and for individuals (e.g. *Ma-ha Bok-da-gaw' thok-pat-ti*', and *Shin Ra'hta'tha-rok-pat-ti*).

A-RI'YA

Translated by Rhys Davids & Stede (1921-5) from Pali *ariya* as: 1. In a racial sense, as the member of an ancient clan; 2. noble, distinguished, of high birth; 3. in accord with the customs and ideals of the Aryan clans, right, good. But Burmese Buddhists widely understand it as a state achieved by Buddhist practice. The

Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1965:8) described this state as follows:

Now what is *Ariya-gati*? It is deliverance from the dispersion of existence after death. Or it is the disappearance of that "dispersion of existence" which is conjoined with the destiny of inevitable death in every existence. It is also the potentiality of being reborn in higher existences or in existences according to one's choice. It is also not like the fall of coconuts from trees; but it is to be compared to birds which fly through the air to whatsoever place or tree on which they may wish to perch. Those men, Devas and Brahmas who have attained the *Ariyan* state, can get to whatever better existence, i.e. as men, Devas, Brahmas, they may wish to be reborn into, when they expire from the particular existence, they are destined to be reborn in a better or higher existence, and at the same time are entirely free from rebirth into lower and miserable existences. Moreover, if they are reborn again in the abode of men, they never become of the lower or poorer classes, nor are they fools or heretics, but become quite otherwise. It is the same in the abodes of Devas and Brahmas. They are entirely set free from the *Puthuj-jana-gati*.'

I initially translated *a-ri'ya* simply as 'saint', but KN pointed out that this translation has strong western connotations. He distinguished between saintliness as a 'social' phenomenon—in the sense of persons to whom is attributed special communication with god and/or whom people accept to be saintly in character—and as an 'individual' phenomenon—saintliness in the sense of having achieved a high level of largely unaided intuitive knowledge. The former, requiring some form of sanction in the sense of being a 'chosen' person (e.g. canonization), has a more important role to play in the Judaeo-Christian notion of 'saint', whereas the latter, needing no recognition by anyone else, plays a more important role in the Burmese Buddhist notion.

In this way, Burmese Buddhists distinguish between 'saints' who know right from wrong (*ka-la-ya-na' pu'htu'zin*), and 'enlightened ones' (*a-ri'ya*) who are superior to the former in that they have higher level of intuitive knowledge. The *ka-la-ya-na' pu'htu'zin* (i.e. who has a good morality and makes devoted attempts at meditation) and the 'do-gooder' *thu-daw gaung*', who are opposed to the very low lay person *an-da' pu'htu'zin*, come closer to our notion of sainthood as a social phenomenon. Concentration meditators may become 'saints' in our sense because of their special 'divine' powers, though they need not have the special intuitive Buddhist knowledge in the Buddhist sense which the *a-ri'ya* has. Some Buddhists hold that Jesus was an *a-ri'ya* who became a Buddhist when he achieved the trances (*zan*) which allowed him to freely move about between Nepal and the Middle East. He was of at least *a-na-gan* standing because he

could control his appearance (which explains how he rose from the dead).

Ven. Saddhatissa, on the other hand, felt that it was wrong to translate *ariya* as 'enlightened', and that it ought to be translated as 'noble one'. This, indeed, is the way it is translated in Rhys Davids & Stede (1921:25:77), who gave as its secondary meaning, '2. (social) noble, distinguished, of high birth'. Yet this again refers to what is largely an ascribed characteristic ('illustrious by rank, title, or birth...'), as does the first meaning given in this dictionary: '1. (racial) Aryan'.

So as to meet both objections, I translate *a-ri-ya*, following Hok Sein (1978:558), as 'holy one', meaning 'morally and spiritually perfect...', to convey the idea of self-generated (instead of god or society inspired) knowledge.

BEIK-THEIK HSA-YA

The sources from which the Master of *beik-theik* (*ab-hisaka*) derives his skills include the four Vedic scriptures: *Tha-ma'wei-da'* (*Sāmaveda*); *Ya-zu'wei-da'* (*Yajurveda*); *I-yu'wei-da'* (*Rgveda*); and *A-hlat-ba-na'wei-da'* (*Atharvaveda*) (Wi-thu'da 1982:123). Burmese aspirant *law'ki weik-za* are particularly keen on the latter texts, which contain the many secret spells for preparation of *in*, *aing* and *man-dan*. Indeed, the Master of *beik-theik* is not only dressed as a 'Brahmin' and knows their customs and language, but is termed *pon-na'* (Wi-thu'da 1982:122-23), which means 'generally a person who belongs to the Brahmin caste and earns his living by such means as astrology and collecting alms' (MAA 1980:37). The Master of *beik-theik* draws on a much larger store of knowledge besides, mixing it with Burmese anecdotes and knowledge from the Pali scriptures. Aung Chin (1978:19) claimed the *beik-theik hsa-ya* means 'wise man' (*thu'uka-mein*), and claimed him to be the Burmese equivalent of the Brahmanic *para-weik*.¹ KN pointed out that many Burmese people do not associate the Master of the *beik-theik* with Brahmanism, and think of him as a Burmese Buddhist. Though it is often those who have been in the monastery for a prolonged period who perform this role, there are many other people who qualify in popular opinion as a *beik-theik hsa-ya*; a well-known film director, named Sein Lwin Lei, turned *beik-theik hsa-ya*, and is so popular that he earns as much as 500 kyats per ceremony (equivalent to a good month's salary), with sometimes three ceremonies in a day. Another well-known *beik-theik hsa-ya* is an ex-lecturer in Pali at Mandalay University. KN viewed the whole art of *beik-theik* has having nothing to do with Buddhism, yet Wi-thu'da (1982:125-26) regrets that it is not sufficiently included in modern *shin-byu*, and that young people in the modern age do not know enough about these things.

BIOGRAPHIES, NEW

Many new-style biographies appeared during the 1930s and 1940s which described the lives of national

heroes in the struggle for independence. One such biography was *Hsa-ya Lun' at-hlok-pat-ti'* (1937) by (Tet hpon'gyi') Thein' Hpei.² After the war a flood of biographies appeared, including many brief biographies written for the new Burmese Encyclopaedia (*Myan-ma'swe-son-kyan'*) published by Sa-bei Beik-man (of which the first volume appeared in 1954). Also biographies appeared in the 'Life mirrors' (*Ba-wa'kyei'mon*) series by the publisher *Tha-ma Meik-ta'*, founded in 1955, including those of: (U') Ok-ta-ma', (Bo-gyok) Aung Hsan, Wun'tho-saw-hpwa'gyi', and (U') Nu'.

During the post-war period modern biographical styles evolved with an emphasis on modern methods of research prior to writing.³ During this period many summary biographies were collected together in volumes.⁴

Episodes on the lives of ordinary people were written especially by Lu-du' U' Hla (e.g. *Htaung hnin' lu-tha'*, *Lei' ne' a-tu*, and *Hlaung-gyaing'de' ga' hnget-nge-mya'*).

Writings on the lives of early Burmese heroes and early intellectuals also became popular during the post-war period.⁵

BNTA

A Ministry of Religious Affairs was created in 1950, after National Independence, which took responsibility for implementing legislative acts dealing with religion such as the Ecclesiastical Courts Acts, and the Pali University and Da-ma-sa-ri-ya' Act. A need was perceived for a separate body, less directly responsible to government, which could devote itself exclusively to the promotion and propagation of the *Da-ma'* (Smith 1965:148-52). With this aim in mind, an act of parliament (Act No. LVI, 1950) allowed the Religious Affairs Ministry to establish the *Naing-ngan-daw Bok* → *Naing-ngan-daw Bok* (NBTA), also known as the Union of Buddha Sasana Council (BSC) (Brohm 1956:404). Together with its Executive Committee (EC) this became 'a state-financed agency for the promotion and propagation of Buddhism' (Smith 1965:126). The NBTA functioned mostly as an advisory forum while implementation remained with the EC. The two bodies were composed entirely of Buddhist laymen.

NBTA aims were: 1. to 'be a body which would represent all the Buddhists in the country, an organization which would provide a united religious leadership'; 2. to 'lay a firm foundation for Buddhism in the country by encouraging the true practice of religion'; 3. to 'defend Buddhism from ideological attack'; and 4. to 'send Buddhist missionaries to other countries to propagate the Dhamma, just as America and Britain had sent out Christian missionaries'. NBTA membership numbered over eighty, including: a) the members of Executive Council; b) regional representatives of private Buddhist associations in the Shan (5 members), Kachin (4), Chin (3), Kaya (2), Karen (2) States, and regional representatives from Mandalay (2) and Rangoon (2), and one each from remaining districts.

- 1 Pali *Purohita*, meaning '1. placed in front, i.e. foremost or at the top, in phrase *deva'inda-purohita* the gods with Indra at their head; 2. the king's head priest (brahmanic), or domestic chaplain, acting at the same time as a sort of Prime Minister' (Rhys Davids 1921:5:470).
- 2 Also *Ye'bau-thon'gyeikat-hlok-pat-ti'* (1943), by Mya'daung' Nyo, on the 30 Burmese comrades who received training in Japan; the biography of (U') Aung Hsan' by (U') Bu' Ga-lei', (Bo) Htun' Hla', and (U') Aung Than'.
- 3 For example, among the more well-researched biographies belong (Maung) Htin's *Yaw'min'gyi' Hpo' Hlaing-at-hlok-pat-ti'*, and those by Lu-du' Daw A-ma' (*Pyi-thu chit-thaw'a-nu'pyin-ya the, Aung-ba-la', Hpo' Sein, Sein-ga-don', and Shwe-man' Tin Maung*).
- 4 For example: *A-myo'tha-mi' sa-hso-daw-mya'* by (Daw) Ma' Ma' Gyi'; *Sa-pyu'sa-hso-pok-ko-gyato-mya'* at-hlok-pat-ti' by Da-gon Nat-shin; *Sa-hso-daw-mya'* at-hlok-pat-ti' by (Maung) Thu'da'; *Gan-da-win-pok-ko-gyato-mya'* at-hlok-pat-ti' by Hla' Tha-mein; *Daik-so' i min' hnin' sa-hso' by Daik So'*, and *Pa-hla-ma' Myan-ma-mya' do' by Min' Yu' Wel*.
- 5 For example, U' Htun' *Shin-at-hlok-pat-ti'* and U' Pon-nya' *at-hlok-pat-ti'* by (U') Hpo' Kya'; *Myan-ma-wun-gyi' hmu'gyi'mya'* at-hlok-pat-ti' and *Myan-ma-pyin-nya-shi'gyi'mya'* at-hlok-pat-ti' by (Maw-bl Hsa-ya) Thein; *Taw Sein Hko at-hlok-pat-ti'* by (Pa-gan-wun-dauk U') Tin; and, by (Tha-din'sa Hsa-ya U') Thein' Maung, the biographies of historical Burmese heroes such as Min'ye'kyaw-awa, Ba-yin'naung, A-laung'hpaw-ya', and Ban-du'la'; *Bo-wa-zi-na'at-hlok-pat-ti'* by Ma-ha-hwei; in the various early magazines such as *Thu-ri-ya'* and *Myan-ma'a-lin' Magazine* about various political leaders such as (U') Ok-ta-ma', and about intellectuals such as (U') Shwe Zan Aung.

EC's responsibilities were: (a) the administration of matters which will help Buddhism to prosper in the Union or abroad, either alone or in cooperation with other associations; (b) the establishment of Buddhist missionary classes, schools or centres, either in the Union or abroad; (c) the administration of oral and written *pa-ri-yat-ti* examinations and the furtherance of the *pa-ri-yat-ti* *tha-tha-na* by other means; (d) administering matters which will promote the *pa-di-pat-ti* *tha-tha-na*; (e) administering matters which will assist in the efflorescence and progress of Buddhist literature and culture; (f) administering matter which will bring about good will and unity among Buddhists; (g) encouraging all people to live according to the teachings of the Buddha; (h) the administration of matters which will bring peace and prosperity to all according to Buddhist teachings; and (i) administering all matters which will fulfil the objectives set forth in the Act and which will lead to the prospering of Buddhism and other Buddhist activities (Brohm 1957:407-408). EC membership was composed as follows: a) Minister of Religious Affairs; b) nine persons appointed by the President of the Union selected by a council of ranking members of the Sangha; c) eight other individuals appointed directly by the president of the Union; and d) nine other representatives chosen from among the members of the BNTA by that Council itself (Brohm 1956:405-406). The nine persons appointed by the president of the Union was on the advice of the Ovadacariya Hsa-ya-daws (who were themselves elected under Ecclesiastical Courts Act, 1949).

The 1950 Buddha Sasana Organization Act set out, as the Minister of Religion put it, 'to organize the Promoters of the Faith into some kind of Parliament of sasana.' (U) Nu' defined its purpose during his introduction of this bill in Parliament, as 'to propagate the dhamma (teaching) in foreign lands...and...to lay solid and lasting foundations of buddhism in this land'. But, being a politician, his aim in supporting such Buddhist organisation was at least partly political: it has been suggested that (U) Nu' perceived in the BNTA an instrument in fighting communism and insurrection (Linker 1967:168).

BTNA

This non-governmental organisation behind the Maha-si meditation movement was the precursor of the governmental BNTA (see above), sharing many of its membership and goals. Founded in 1947, the full English name of the Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe'gyok (BTNA) was, at its foundation, 'Union of Burma Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation'. The name was changed in 1979 to 'Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma Buddha Sasana Nuggaha Organisation' (BTNA 1979a:3). It is sometimes abbreviated to BSNA (English transliteration of BSN A-hpwe') and sometimes as BSNO (English translation of A-hpwe' as 'Organisation'). But I retain the abbreviation of the Burmese transcription BTNA.

BTNA (1958:ix - gx) includes interesting statements concerning its own value:

'In this world, covered with a variety of cultures, there are good and noble books, and in these, customs, ways, and world culture and arts are stored like treasures of precious stones and metals. Those who are suited to be covered with treasures have to dig them up. And so also, this history of events files together into a treasure of gems the various noble historical events of such things as fame, the famous and associations, so that generations to come may easily refer to these precious adornments of the world which is custom and culture'.

But the authors hasten to qualify and limit culture to that which pertains to Buddhist *tha-tha-na* and all those efforts made by people to support this:

Among these histories of events, we must pay special attention to only those real gems of real culture which are of distinct and true benefit to world and *neik-ban*,

to happiness of body and spirit. That is why the *bok-da'* win, the *ma-ha* win, and the *ya-za* win, which relate events pertaining to the Buddha, people, and kings, are jewels comely bright and shiny in the midst of our world [both the *ma-ha* win and the *ya-za* win include long stories about royal efforts to support the *tha-tha-na*].

The real meaning of the BTNA in the historical context comes out next:

'And so also, in a period of time after the umbrellas of our Burmese kings, sponsors of our *tha-tha-na*, were broken and their dynasties were destroyed, no one could have imagined that this BTNA would become a Missionary association opened by the leaders of our country who, once again, respect the Buddha and the *tha-tha-na*.'

Having explained this precious event, simultaneous to those in authority having taken back the new Union of Burma:

(i) The country leaders, who have great respect for the *tha-tha-na*, have willingly accepted the government posts of president and Prime Minister.

(ii) In accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, a Missionary Association was set up, and the president, the Prime Minister, the Ministers, and the country's wealthy ones went in front, taking the responsibility for the advancement of the *tha-tha-na*.

(iii) Making appear a great international missionary *tha-tha-na* 'yeik-tha', a mansion of the *tha-tha-na*, dealing with the science of *tha-tha-na* [note the use of 'science', Burmese *theik-pin*, 'knowledge which puts emphasis on actual experience': practice of WM meditation is thought to use the same methodology of experiment.]

(viii) This national Bok-da' Tha-tha-na A-hpwe' which has never before been set up, is a department which was born out of a Government Act.

(ix) On a great scale should be established meditation teachers who can teach modern methods and WM science, and many sister centres should be opened internationally.

BTNA TRUSTEES

Trustees must undergo reelection after three years. Yearly at least seven Trustees step down, and seven or more are elected. There are three classes of Trustees:

(i) Standby Trustees (*a-yan a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'win*) - Ordinary or life BTNA members who have contributed to the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha, and whose number is set and approved by the Trustees. After Standby Trustees perform at least two years of continuous service in BTNA work, they may be elected into a vacant Trustee post by the Board of Trustees. Standby Trustees are allowed to attend and give advice at Trustee meetings.

(ii) Ordinary Trustees (*tha-man a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'win*) - Those who have been elected by the Board of Trustees as full Trustees.

(iii) Honorary Trustees (*gon-du'zaung a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'win*) - Those who have had responsibility as an ordinary Trustee for at least three years, and whose knowledge is of special service to work in the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha. They are allowed to attend meetings and give advice (BTNA 1979a:6-9).

In the year 1980-1, six Honorary and three Standby Trustees were elected (BTNA 1981:18).

BROHM

The distinction between urban and village religious life permeates Brohm's thesis (1957). The first part dealt with village Burma, as represented by his study (based on three months fieldwork, p29) of village Kaungauk, while the second part dealt with urban Burma, in particular the city of Rangoon. Comparison between these two throughout the thesis lead him to certain conclusions.

First, in the urban setting he found 'a transformed monkhood, divorced in many respects from the role of the *religieux* found in rural areas' (1957:333), which was undisciplined and politicized (1957:302-33). In the

urban setting, Burmese Buddhism is shown to have become secularized,

'What is unique and different in urban Burma of the present century... is the growth and proliferation of secular organizations which find their central cause in Buddhism and in activities associated with the Buddhist message, but whose members find their basic relationship to one another in the commonality of their specialized callings or avocations in the complex urban milieu' (1957:333-4).

Brohm presented the practice of WM as essentially such urban secular activity, which is not popular in village life,

'The evidence afforded by the Old Kaungauk example is inconclusive in nature at best, but from what was actually observable there seems very little interest among these simple rice farmers in the practice of anything so intangible as genuine Buddhist meditation... meditation was most certainly not an integral part of the lives of any Old Kaungauk citizens at the time of study, with the exception of the members of the monkhood themselves, the one ex-monk, and to a lesser degree the aged U San Chai'.

By secularization Brohm meant 'the increasing trend toward the development of non-monastic religious leadership', and he presented the WM meditation centre as one of two secular Buddhist institutions, the other being the urban merit society. Urban merit societies change merit making in urban Burma from 'an individualistic occupation' to a collective one where 'its members share the benefit, in terms of an improved karma, that any individual who performs "meritorious" acts will achieve'. This membership was primarily composed of the 'urban sub-groups which have been segmented by occupational specialization' (Brohm 1957:334-40).

Though different, both are interwoven. The second is sponsored by the secular merit societies, but on the other hand, 'a most significant feature of the pattern of dissemination that this spiritual message has taken has been its reliance upon additional leadership supplied by the laity rather than the Buddhist monkhood' (1957:351).

He went on to point out that what singled out this movement was lay involvement in WM practice: many laymen become meditation masters and, 'the layman himself may aspire to status within a socio-religious hierarchy without abandoning the life of a householder' (1957:351-2). He concluded that, 'it is difficult to see wherein the attraction of the monastic life in urban surroundings could long endure', and with reference to the popular practice of meditation, 'nothing could more clearly reflect this trend toward urban secularization and the further erosion of the primary foundation of Buddhist monasticism'.

A second point Brohm reflected upon was that 'the most dynamic symbol of revivalism in Burma (meditation) seems to enjoy very little of a popular peasant base'.

'To return to the work of the Sasana Council: the practice of periodical retirement for meditation is being fostered by the opening of meditation centres such as the Sasana Yeiktha retreat in Hermitage Road at the Council's headquarters' (Tinker 1957:172).

Brohm's conclusion to the thesis is that the role of WM in the Revival programme is a dubious one, because 'the government's program, being born of urban and not peasant progenitors, is necessarily directed to urban subjects rather than the peasantry'.

'If vipassana meditation, for example, (whose furtherance is, of course, a most important aspect of the over-

all program) is to become a significant element in the peasant's religious activity, then he must receive extensive stimulus and "education" as to the newly conceived importance of such behavior. Unaffected as he is by the heady brew of renaissance nationalism, he is not likely to discover for himself the value in an experience which amounts to emotional identification with a new Burmese ethos. Pseudo-scientific rationalizations and justifications for urban religious behavior of this genre may be wasted upon him if Western concepts of reality have never appreciably shaken his own traditional view of the universe' (Brohm 1957:439).

BURMA

Burma is an English reference, but it is known in the written and formally spoken Burmese language as 'Burma country' (*Myan-ma Naing-ngan*), and in the everyday spoken language as *Ba-ma Pyei*.⁶

During the post 1962 period of military rule Burma became known in Burmese as *Pyel-daung-zu* (group of countries) *Hso-she-lit* (Socialist) *Tha-ma-da* (Elect or chosen, to convey the sense of Republic) *Myan-ma-naing-ngan* (Burma State) (see Taylor 1987:1-12). But in the face of the unpopularity of the Burma Socialist Party during 1989, in June of that year the Government changed the country's name to Myanmar [*Myan-ma*] along with the name of the capital Rangoon, which was changed to Yangon [*Yan-gon*], both more true to the Burmese pronunciation.

In English sources we encounter the following common short-hands for particular areas of Burma: Upper/Lower Burma, Burma Proper/Hills. Both are also distinctions in the Burmese language of today. In the Burmese language it is common to distinguish between 'Lower (Burma) Person' (*auk-tha* for men, and *auk-thu* for women), and 'Upper (Burma) person' (*a-hiet-tha* for men, and *a-hiet-thu* for women). Also: *a-hiet-myo* 'kyei' ywa, 'Upper Burma towns and villages' (Judson 1953). The distinction between Burma Proper vs. the Hills is evident in the distinction commonly drawn between 'mountain people' (*taung-dan* 'tha'), and 'rice field cultivators' (*le-tha-ma*).

BURMAN/BURMESE

The terms 'Burman' and 'Burmese' have been employed in conflicting ways in English sources. Some such as Lieberman (1984:xiii) (and including Steinberg 1981:8), have given the terms the following definite usage:

'the term "Burman" is employed ... to refer to the major ethno-linguistic group of the Irrawaddy basin. The term "Burmese" is used in a more general sense to refer to all groups that inhabit the basin and surrounding highlands, including Burmans, Mons, Karens and Shans'.

Yet evidently such definite meaning is purely contextual to the study in question as others, such as J.S. Furnivall (1957:g), use the terms in a way quite opposite: 'It is convenient to denote all Burma nationals comprehensively as Burmans, reserving the term Burmese for those who speak the Burmese language as their mother tongue.'

The fact of the matter is that there is no standard definition of these terms, that its usage varies between authors and with the perspectives from which they write, and that this ultimately leads to a confusing picture of the meanings of these terms today. Spiro (1970:20), for example, uses alternately 'Burman' or 'Burmese'.

6 The etymology of *ba-ma* or *myan-ma* remains uncertain (see Yule & Burnell 1903). Some have speculated that reference to *myan-ma* and *ba-ma* derived from P. *Brahma*, meaning variously 'the supreme good', a ritual expert, a holy man, etc. (see Rhys Davids 1921:5) and that it came into use after adoption of Theravada Buddhism. Others have argued that it was the original name for the Burmese prior to adoption of Buddhist belief, as the term was already in evidence in other neighbouring languages such as in Chinese.

There is a specific sense in which the terms are used in sources on comparative linguistics. Here it is common, on the basis of comparisons of vocabulary, morphology, syntax and phonology, to denote 'Burmese' as a unique literary language of the valley dwelling peoples of Burma, and 'Burman' (as in 'Tibeto-Burman') or 'Burmic' as one of three sub-families (Burmic, Sinitic, Tibetic) of the Sino-Tibetan group of languages, which comprises over 300 languages. The classification of ethnic groups has historically followed this linguistic classification.

A forceful argument against the implications of such linguistically derived ethnic classification was made by Leach (1960), in which he argued that ecological and political factors define frontier zones better than precise linguistic or cultural boundaries between groups. The problem of ethnicity in Burmese history has been addressed in Lieberman (1978). A recent statement on the complexity of ethnicity in modern Burma was made by Taylor (1982), who drew attention to the inadequacy of Western notions of ethnicity in the Burmese context, and the influence these Western notions have had upon modern Burmese political thought:

'Because ethnicity has generally been conceptualised as an ascribed attribute with the implicit assumption of instinctive and primordial antagonisms between different groups, as has been customary in Western political thought since the rise of nationalism, rather than as a relational attribute reflecting ecological and subcultural characteristics, a false problem has been posed in the practice and study of Burma's politics... This ascriptive conceptual mode for intellectually mapping the structure of Burma has been so widely accepted by Burma's political elite that they, like the Europeans who created it, have tended to accept the broad ethnic categories as embodying living social formations with political prerogatives'.

The official government Burmese dictionary (MAA 1980) sidesteps the issue of Burman ethnicity by telescoping 'Burmese' (*myan-ma*) and 'Burman' (*ba-ma*) into one word. The primary (and only relevant) meaning of *ba-ma* is given as 'the pronunciation of *myan-ma*—i.e. the claim is that it is the same as *myan-ma* in informal speech. *Myan-ma* on the other hand is given as 'A people who have a long history of residence in Burma'. There is no reference to differences in religion, language or racial features.

DA-MA'

Da-ma' (P. *dhamma*) is one of the 'Three Jewels', the other jewels being the Buddha (*Bok-da'*), and the monastic order (*than-ga*). As referred to by the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw in his *The manuals of Buddhism* (1965:114), the *da-ma'* has 84,000 constituents (*da-ma' hkan-da baung* "shit-thaung" *lei-daung*), which was originally expounded in *Psalms of the brethren*, Ananda's verses, verse 1024. Aw-ba-tha (1975:303) divided these into: 21,000 belonging to the monastic code (*wi'ni*), 21,000 to the Buddha's discourses (*thok-ta'*), and 42,000 to Buddhist philosophy (*a-bi-da-ma*).

The most common term for meditation in Burma today is *ta-ya* "a" *htok thi*, i.e. 'apply oneself to the *dhamma*', and it is these eternal laws that the meditator seeks to know intuitively.

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1965:209-10) distinguished between two different type of *da-ma'* heritage: between 'worldly *da-ma'*' (based on qualities of morality, concentration and insight which are temporary and instrumental in nature) and 'otherworldly *da-ma'*'

(based on permanent achievements in morality, concentration and insight).

DU-DIN

Meditating monks often practice one or more of the 13 ascetic practices known as *du-din* (austerities, Pali *dhutanga*), which serve to cleanse defilements of the practitioner. As Carrithers (1983: 62-3) points out, these practices are not an essential part of the Buddhist path (only eight are mentioned in the *Majjhima Nikaya*, but only in passing). But their practice helps those who self-consciously seek a meditative life to seclude themselves, to make their lives generally more simple (e.g. no need to think about second meals or clothing), and it helps them to exercise control over their senses. These austerities are:

1) refuse-ragman's practice (*pan'thu'ku*, P. *pamsukūlikanga*), i.e. one who dresses exclusively in robes made from discarded cloth which has been used to clothe the dead, clean the womb after childbirth, etc., but not cloth specifically donated to the monastic order by donors;

2) three-rober's practice (*tei-zi-wa-yeik tin*, P. *teciyārikanga*), who wears a set of robes consisting of three pieces, but does not accept a fourth;

3) the practice of soliciting alms by going round (cf staying in one place) (*pein-da'bak*, P. *pindapāṭikanga*);

4) the practice of moving in unbroken line from house-to-house to solicit alms (i.e. without moving on in case of big queues or out of preference for the alms from another house) (*tha-pa'da-na'*, P. *sapadanācārikanga*);

5) eating food at only one sitting a day (*ei-ku'tha-neik*, P. *ekāsānikanga*);

6) bowl-fooder's practice (*bat-da-baing*, *pattapindikanga*), i.e. eating all foods mixed in a single bowl only, which mixes savoury and sweet, and things one may not like;

7) no second helpings practice (*hka-lu'pyit-sa*, P. *khalu-paccā-bhattikanga*);

8) forest-life practice (*a-ra-mya'kin*, P. *ārāṇṇikanga*), i.e. to live within a stone-throw's distance of the safety of inhabited settlement;

9) tree-rootman's practice (*yok-hka'mu*, P. *rukhamūlikanga*), in which a covered dwelling is refused in preference for the protection offered by a tree;

10) open-spacer's practice (*at-baw'ka-thi'ka'*, P. *abbhokāsikanga*), in which no protection is afforded by roof or tree;

11) cemetery practice (*thok-tan*, P. *śosānikanga*), in which the person lives at a cemetery to observe and smell the cremation and disposal of human remains;

12) any-bedder's practice, i.e. one who accepts any place to sleep (*ya'hta than-da'ti*, P. *yatha-saṇṭhatikanga*);

13) sitting-man's practice, i.e. someone who does not lie down to sleep (*neik-thit*, P. *nesajjikanga*) (Aw-ba-tha 1975: 307-8; Pe Maung Tin 1921-5: 59-95).

ENLIGHTENMENT PERIOD

These schemes do not come from the Pali canon, and some authors have warned that they make no difference to those motivated to devote themselves seriously to Buddhist practice.

The first posed the order as descending from high class holy ones to lower ones every 1,000 years: the first thousand years the achievement of *ba-di'than-bi-da'pat-la' ya-han'da* is the highest

achievement, the second thousand years it is *thok-hka' wi'pa'tha-ka'*, the third thousand it is *a-na-gan*, the fourth it is *tha-ga-da-gan*, and during the last 1,000 years only *thaw'da-ban*, the lowest of holy achievements is possible. In this scheme the last 3,000 years do not allow for the achievement of *neik-ban* in the world of man. This would mean that over the last 500 years there would be no *ya-han'da*.⁷

The second and third schemes are not nearly as pessimistic, viewing only the last millennium as difficult for the achievement of enlightenment, during which at best a reasonable level of morality can be achieved.⁸

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's (1965:228) argument was slightly different. He held that of the four kinds of refuges (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, and Kamma), only the first three exist during the *tha-tha-na*, whereas the latter exists outside it also.

(See also WM Period and Five Periods).

FIVE PERIODS

The following quote concerns these periods:

So this period is a period of change, I am not wrong am I. So, after the Buddha passed away there was a monk Hpok-tha Ma-heti-gyi', who was a *ya-han'da*. Than-tha-ra' hermit asked him a question. In answer to this question, Hpok-tha said that this period is the 5,000 year period set by the Buddha, where the 5,000 years have been divided into sections of 500 years each.

So the first period was the 500 years after the demise of the Buddha, which is called the Pure Period (*wi'mok-ti' hti*). This Pure Period is a period where the taste of purity can be had, and 'taste of purity' is the happiness in the path and fruition after applying oneself to the three disciplines of morality, concentration, and 'wisdom'. The 500 years after the 500 years of this period are over are called the 'concentration' period. Then people who perform *zan* and 'concentration' will be more than WM work. After this 'concentration' period there is the 'morality' period... Going in reverse, from 'wisdom', 'concentration', 'morality'... [refers to fact that in normal religious achievement morality comes first, and wisdom last.] Well, at the time of the 'moral' period 'humans', *net* and *bya'ma* put emphasis only on morality. When these 500 years are over comes the *Thu'la'* [error here: It should be *Thok-ta'* or *gutta; thu'ta'* means divine sight and divine hearing period.] In this period there is plenty of transmitted knowledge. This period is replete in 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*) and all the scriptures which the Buddha taught. After this period the next 500 years we get to the 'charity' period. After this 'charity' period is over 2,500 years are over.

On completion of these 2,500 years, it starts all over again for the remaining 2,500 years, starting with the 'purity' period, this 'purity' period, and in this 'purity' period path and fruition of the *ix-ya'* can be achieved. It is like the time when the Buddha became enlightened a period in which, applying oneself to the three 'disciplines' of 'morality', 'concentration', and 'wisdom', the happiness of path and fruition attainment may be had, a period of meditation, the *wi'pa'tha-na* period... Yes, the method of the earliest teachings of the Buddha, contained in the *Da-ma-set-kya*, the Noble Eightfold path... (preaching on occasion of rainy season by BK as transcribed from a tape in Ko Lei 1980:555-6).

HSA-YA HSIN ZET

Parampara (P) is the Pali term for teacher-pupil succession, meaning 'after the other', i.e. succession, series. Its more frequently used Burmese equivalent is *hsa-ya sin zet*, lit. 'teacher order link' or *a-hset a-mwe*, lit. 'link

creeper'. For example, in *Tha-tha-na lin-ka-ra'sa-dan'* the terms used are *hsa-ya sin zet* and *hsa-ya sin da-byi' zet*, with only occasional reference to *a-sa-ri'ya' pa-ran-pa-ra'* (p48). Also reference is made throughout to *tha-tha-na-daw zet*. The common way of denoting royal lineages (*min' zet*) is also by using the same term *hset*.

KA-MA-HTAN-NA'SA-RI'YA'

The common term, used for both lay and monk meditation teachers, is *ka-ma-htan-na'sa-ri'ya'* (a preacher is known as *da-ma' ka-hti'ka'* or *da-ma sa-ri'ya'*), but lay teachers are sometimes also referred to as *ka-ma-htan' hsa-ya*. In *Visudhimagga* the meditation teacher is referred to as *kalyāṇa-mitta*, translated by Dutt (1941:215,233) as 'spiritual preceptor' and by Pe Maung Tin (1921-5:114) as 'good friend'. Rhys Davids & Stede (1921-5:199) gives: '1. a good companion, a virtuous friend, an honest, pure friend' and '2. as t.t. a spiritual guide, spiritual adviser'.

KU'THO

Buddhist merit (*ku'tho*) may be understood as referring to the benefit arising out of upholding, supporting and propagating the Three Jewels through the Noble Eightfold Path of 'charity' (*da-na*), 'morality' (*thi-le*), 'meditation' (*ba-wa-na*) and 'scriptural learning' (*pa-ri'yat-ti*). KN defined 'merit' as 'an action which is not reproached by those who have knowledge' (*pyin-nya shi' thu-daw-kaung' ma ke'ye' thaw' a-hmu*).

LAW*KOT-TA-RA/LAW*KI

The meaning of 'worldliness' and 'otherworldliness' in Burmese is conveyed through the many specific mythical incidents, such as recounted in the Buddha birth stories (*zat*) and in the Buddha discourses (*thok*). Their meaning is primarily constituted by events in which the Buddha or the teachings of the Buddha (otherworldliness) are perceived in situations of interaction and conflict with things either not associated with the Buddha or negating the sacredness of Him and His Teachings. Their meaning is therefore open to negotiation, and different events can be claimed to be 'worldly' and 'otherworldly' by different people at different times.

Ultimately, the term 'worldly' refers to all possessing the attribute of impermanence, which includes heavens and gods, while the 'otherworldly' is that which partakes of permanence, and has to be negatively phrased, where 'there is no old age, death or disease'. Proponents of the two forms voiced no disagreement about these definitions, but what they did disagree upon was the meaning of the term 'worldly' in the context of the novitiation ceremony. Here, the meditator applied the term in a much more rigorous sense, which allowed the concept of 'merit' also to take on a different meaning. In the context of the novitiation, the meditator's notion of 'otherworldliness' comprises a more limited set of religious goals, namely the practise of meditation and the pursuit of merit, earned through offerings to monks. Anything else is 'worldliness'. The meditator includes in the realm of worldliness, among others, entertainment of the laity, a concern with spirits, royal symbolism and 'Hindu' ritual, which from the perspective of the conventional monastic are 'otherworldly' provided they are performed in the context of the novitiation.

7 Yet, as pointed out by KN, Burmese hold that there is much evidence of *ya-han'da* in Burma. For example, in 1986 little round bone remnants were found after the cremation of the Dan-da Hsa-ya-daw at Sa-gaing near Dan-da, which did not burn, which was interpreted to indicate that he had become a *ya-han'da*—this is referred to as 'falling relics' or *dat-daw kya' de* (KN).

8 The second poses the order as: *ba-di'than-bi-da'pal-ta'ya-han'da, sat-hia-bi'ny'a, tei weik-za ya-han'da, thok-hka' wi'pa'tha-ka'*, and *pa-ti'mauk-hka'than-wa'ra' thi-la'*. The third scheme is the same as the second except for its last stage, which is instead the *thaw'da-ban, tha-ga-da-gan, a-na-gan* 1,000 year period.

MA-HA-SI HAGIOGRAPHIES

The following are known Ma-ha-si hagiographies:

i) 1952—(Min-ga-la U") Aung Myin' *The-tha-na-da'za'hi'ri'pa'ua'ra'Da-ma-sa-ri'ya'Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw A-shin Thaw'ba-na'i hta-rok-pat-li'a-kyin'* (publisher?). Composed on the occasion (4 June) of the award of the Ek-ga-ma-ha-pan-di'ta' title to the Ma-ha-si at the President's house.

ii) 1966 (BurE 1328) *Ek-ga-ma-ha-pan-di'ta'Ma-ha-si hta-rok-pat-li'a-kyin'*. By (Wun-na'gyaw-hin U") Ba' Than" (also known as (Shin) Bok-da'gaw'tha'). (Reprinted 1978) (publisher?).

iii a) 1974—(A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da. *The hagiography of the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw-gyi'* in Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha (1974:47-223). The earliest version of the leading Burmese language biography, combined with the biographies of 173 monks teaching in the Ma-ha-si tradition and 13 lay pupils, in the work *Ma-ha-si practice lineage history*.

iii b) 1979—(A-shin) Thi-la-nan-da (BurE 1341, BudE 2323). A-shin Thi-la-nan-da's earlier 1974 Ma-ha-si hagiography reissued as a separate booklet. It was decided to publish this separately because the hagiography in the full 'practice history' was 'inconveniently placed among all the other hagiographies in the book', and because only 2,000 of the full version had been printed.

iii c) 1982—Thi-la-nan-da (1982). English translation of Thi-la-nan-da's 1979 Burmese hagiography, also published by the BTNA.

iv) 1978—'The Hagiography of the Mahasi Sayadaw' included in (*Practical Vipassana Meditational Exercises*), (BurE 1340).

This work includes the first very brief English biography of the Ma-ha-si. Composed on the occasion of the Ma-ha-si's instruction festival in the month of Nat-taw by the (U") Nyl Nyl, the BTNA executive.

v) A hagiography is being composed in two volumes by 'the teacher of the scriptures, Da-ma-sa-ri'ya' and linguist A-shin Kei-la-tha (BA Colombo) from Ma-ha-wi'thok-da-re-ma'daik, Pa-hkok-ku. To be published by the BTNA.

I have only been able to get hold of Thi-la-nan-da's hagiographies (1974, 1979 and 1982). There are some notable differences between the 1974 and the 1979 editions. The latter has more and different pictures, and, while the earlier edition mixes them in with the text, the latter puts them in front. Also: a few headings are missing in the 1979 edition ('the most practical work' p89, 'meditation methods which had been forgotten' p91, and 'hpaung'hpein ka-ma-hian' p203); a few headings are added ('one yu-za-na, eight miles' p106, 'neik-tha-ya' of olden times' p146); a few headings are in different order so as to make better chronological sense (the 'going to Taung-waing'ga-lei' after the war' and 'Ma-ha-tha-di'pa-hian thok neik-tha-ya' are put before the section on 'Meeting with (Sir U") Thwin').

The 1982 hagiography is, with few minor variations, the same as its 1979 Burmese original. It has additionally a preface by its translator (U") Min Swei (also known as Min Kyaw Thu) dated 28 Nov 1981, instead of the (Min-ga-la U") Aung Myin' preface in the Burmese original. It has substantially fewer photographs (only one). The translation is not always accurate in all places. Some whole passages are left out so as not to confuse the English reader who knows little about Pali scholarship (e.g. in the assessment of Ma-ha-si's scholarly record 1982:11), sometimes a few words are left out (e.g. words such as 'Burmese' on 1982:9), sometimes bits are added (e.g. 'where reside the community of monks, or a monk or two' on 1982:9), and sometimes there are inexplicable factual discrepancies (e.g. on 1982:77 it is indicated that there were 49 monks reciting hymns, but in the original it is indicated that monks recited for 49 days). There is an interesting difference in the use of personal pronouns; these are for the most part absent in the Burmese version, but have been added in the English translation (e.g. while 1979:11-12 is written without

pronoun, 1982:13-15 interprets this text, by inserting the first person pronoun and by putting the text in quotation marks, as being issued by the Ma-ha-si's mouth/thoughts; it seemed to me as if the hagiographer was writing about the Ma-ha-si, and a first pronoun should refer to him, not to the Ma-ha-si). For the sake of brevity and clarity, some of the quotations given in chapter 7 from Thi-la-nan-da (1982) are paraphrased in the text.

MA-HA-SI MEDITATION CENTRES OPENINGS

1938 1	§ 1957 11	1969 7
1946 1	1958 7	1970 18
1947 3	¶ 1959 10	1971 8
1948 1	1960 6	1972 7
1949 6	1961 6	¶ 1973 12
1950 4	1962 4	1974 10
1951 8	1963 1	1975 9
1952 10	1964 6	1976 8
¶ 1953 13	1965 6	1977 26
1954 8	1966 7	¶ 1978 16
1955 4	1967 8	¶ 1979 14
1956 9	1968 4	¶ 1980 14

A total of 293 centres were opened over the 43 year period between 1938-80, which averages at 6.8 centres per annum, rising to 8.79 per annum for the 33 year period between 1947-1980. The pre-independence period (1938-48) saw a rise of 6 centres, or 1.5 average per annum. The early post-independence period (1948-62) saw a rise of 103 centres over 13 years, or an average of 7.8 centres per annum. The military period (1962-80) saw a rise of 185 centres over 19 years, or an average of 9.7 per annum. The last 11 years (1970-80) of this period was responsible for the biggest rise in centres at 142, or an average of 12.9 per annum.

MA-HA-SI METHOD JUSTIFIED

In the Ma-ha-si hagiography the following is recounted in justification of the meditation method taught by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (Thi-la-nan-da 1979:168-176).

(Da-ma'ka-hti'ka' Hsa-ya-gyi' U") Chit Aung from Myo' Hla' Myo' wrote in his *Tha-di'pa-hian di-pa-ni kyan'* (p274) (printed 1928, BurE 1290) about the 'rise-fall' method. The author of this work was the pupil of (U") San Htun" from Pyaw-bwe-myo', the first pupil of Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw. The method was described as the observing of 'bulge-fall' of the belly at least 10 years before the Ma-ha-si taught it. Hence, the method was not that of the Ma-ha-si but of the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw. This is certified also by the meditation teacher (U") Myat Kyaw—also a pupil of Min"gun"—in his *Wi'pat-tha-na Ti-ka-kyan'*, Part I, published in 1936 (BurE 1298), two years before the Ma-ha-si began to teach, where it is stated on page 189 that in the Min"gun" gaing" some note their belly 'bulge-fall', or 'rise-fall', which surprised those who did not know this method.

It is very clear that this belly rise and fall method was accepted by the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw, and did not originate with the Ma-ha-si. When the Ma-ha-si first taught, in 1938 (BurE 1300) at Hseik-hkun village, he pointed out the basics of the rise and fall of the belly.

Why did the Ma-ha-si teach this? First he taught to observe whatever came up, but the yaw"gi did not know what to observe, and were looking for things to observe. Because they were asking him for something to observe, and because the rising and falling of the belly comes under 'mindfulness of the body' (*ka-ya nu'pat-tha-na*), involving the air motion of the body and the elements of earth and water, he found that yaw"gi got good concentration by observing whatever came up with the rise and fall as the basis. He used it because of this and the fact that he knew the Min"gun" had used this 'rise-fall' method. It was not necessary to

search for rise-fall, and concentration and *wi'pat-tha-na* knowledge come easy with it. That is why in *Wi'pat-tha-na shu'ni' kyan* rise-fall is given as the basis for observation, and also in the *Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha*.

But though this rise-fall method is given as the basic method for observation, not every *yaw'gi* is given the same method. If *yaw'gi* come who have done *a-na-pi-na'*, then they will be allowed to note their nostrils. The Ma-ha-si and his meditation teachers are not morbid people, as they give preference to having *yaw'gi* achieving *wi'pat-tha-na* knowledge easily and in peace. The rise-fall method is only intended for people who have difficulties in concentration and who have not meditated before. But experienced *yaw'gi* will observe the 6 apertures. With this *tha-di'pa-htan*, of which the rise-fall is the basis, over one hundred thousand *yaw'gi* have achieved the stage at which they saw separation of form and spirit, and the birth and destruction of these.

MA-HA-SI VS THI-LA-NAN-DA

The Ma-ha-si considered Thi-la-nan-da's teacher, the original A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw, as his own teacher. The first encounter between the Ma-ha-si and the original A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw took place after Thaw'ba-na' (the name for the Ma-ha-si before he became the head of a monastery) returned to Taung-wain'ga-lei' in Moulmein with the intention of continuing his studies after having spent seven months teaching meditation at his village of birth.⁹ In between Taung-wain'ga-lei' and Taung-wain'gyi' a new monastery had just been built in 1940 for the Mandalay A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw to stay in, named A-ba'ya-ra-ma' daik. This Hsa-ya-daw had written many works, and is described as fluent in Pali, Sanskrit and mixed Burmese-Pali (*neik-tha-ya'*) works,¹⁰ and as someone who did not get himself involved in any sectarian squabbles. The A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw who stayed for a rainy season proved a boon for U' Thaw'ba-na' who stayed frequently with him to discuss various points of learning. Thi-la-nan-da described the relationship between his own teacher and the Ma-ha-si as follows:

Thus, by asking what he wanted and by making notes, and by studying Pali (*Ma-ga-da'*), Sanskrit and *neik-tha-ya'* with the Taung-wain'ga-lei' daik-kyau'ng' Hsa-ya-daw, A-shin Thaw'ba-na' took the Hsa-ya-daw [i.e. my teacher] as his teacher.'

In 1968 (1330) the Ma-ha-si sent Thi-la-nan-da 1,000 kyats to reprint the original A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw's *Maug-ga-lan*, the volume to which Thi-la-nan-da had so capably contributed, and which the Ma-ha-si so admired.

MEDITATION TERMS

Conze (1956:12-3), after a brief discourse upon the very different meanings of *meditation* in the Theravada canon from the specifically Chinese interpretations as influenced by Taoism, concluded that 'different temperaments and different cultures are indeed bound to react in different ways to the demands of these prac-

tices. It would lead us too far here to enumerate all the possible variations ...' This enormous variation is noticeable in the Burmese language, which has many terms for meditation. To say 'meditation' in Burmese involves reference to any one of the terms below.

Particularly popular for referring to meditating WM style are 'applying oneself to the *ta-ya'*' (*ta-ya'* a' *htok thi*) and lit. 'dhamma sitting' (*ta-ya'* *htaing thi*). About the latter expression KN observed that it leaves out the more elaborate references 'sitting and internalising the *da-ma'* in one's heart' (*ta-ya'* *hnit-lon' thwin' htaing the*) or 'sitting contemplating the *ta-ya'*' (*ta-ya'* *shu' hnat htaing the*). Furthermore, the 'sitting' in this expression is highly misleading, because it is used to refer to meditation in any position, including lying, standing, walking, etc. The story goes that Ananda gained his enlightenment without having adopted any particular position because he was neither lying down, sitting up, or standing—yet here too reference by the Burmese 'sitting the *ta-ya'*' is quite appropriate.

I. Terms which could refer either to concentration meditation or WM: 'Sit (in meditation on) the meditation-objects' (*ka-ma-hlan' htaing thi*), 'observe the meditation objects' (*ka-ma-hlan' shu' thi*), 'cultivate meditation' (*ba-wat-na pwa' thi*), 'observe and note meditation' (*ba-wat-na shu' hnat thi*).

II. Terms which refer to WM: 'Sit insight' (*wi'pat-tha-na htaing thi*), 'sit the mental objects' (*ta-ya'* *htaing thi*), 'apply oneself to the mental objects' (*ta-ya'* a' *htok thi*).

III. Terms which refer to concentration meditation: 'Sit concentration' (*tha-ma-hla' htaing thi*), 'observe the entirety' (*ka-thaing' shu' thi*).

IV. Terms which refer to popular types of concentration meditation: 'Intone prayers of meditation' (*ba-wa-na si' hpyan' thi*), 'chant the objects of meditation' (*ka-ma-hlan' si' hpyan' thi*), 'recite prayers' (*pa-yeik yut thi*), 'tell rosaries' (*ka-di' seik thi*), 'meditate loving kindness' (*myit-ka ba-wa-na pwa' thi*).

V. Technical terms for specific types of meditation which have the 40 objects of meditation:¹¹ for example 'practice earth entirety' (*pa-hla-wi ka-thaing' shu' daj*):

A. The ten entireties (*ka-thaing' P. kasina*)

1. 'earth entirety' (*pathavi kasina*), 2. 'water entirety' (*apo...*), 3. 'fire...' (*tejo...*), 4. air... (*vaayo...*), 5. blue... (*nila...*), 6. yellow... (*pita...*), 7. red... (*lohita...*), 8. white... (*odāta...*), 9. enclosed space... (*ākāsa...*), 10. open air... (*vinnana ākāsa...*).

B. The ten cemetery contemplations (*a-thu'ba' P. asubha*)

11. 'bloated corpse as meditation object', 12. livid..., 13. festering..., 14. cut up..., 15. gnawed..., 16. scattered..., 17. hacked and scattered..., 18. bleeding..., 19. worm-infested..., 20. skeleton...

C. The ten recollections (*a-nok-tha-di' P. anussati*)

21. recollection of the virtues of the Buddha, 22. ...virtues of the Buddha's teaching, 23. ...virtues of the Sangha, 24. ...virtues of one's morality, 25. ...of one's charity and liberality, 26. ...of Devas, 27. ...of death, 28. ...of the body, 29. ...of the breath, 30. ...of peace.

9 Thi-la-nan-da (1979:34-36). It took a while for me to establish that the A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw of this episode was not the same as the author. Pronouns are only infrequently used, in particular when high status persons talk to lower status persons, when they will refer instead to themselves by their titles (e.g. u'zin', *hsa-ya-daw*, *hsa-ya*). As this is the same way others refer to them, it becomes impossible to distinguish first from second or third person. As an A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw (also: Shin Ekka'da-ma') is described in Hla' Tha-mein (1961) as having lived between 1878-1943, it appears that the author of the hagiography is a successor to this *hsa-ya-daw*. On page 36 also a letter is quoted from the Ma-ha-si to the Thi-la-nan-da Hsa-ya-daw, where reference is made to the original A-ba'ya-ra-ma' (A-ba'ya-ra-ma' nu), who must have been Thi-la-nan-da's predecessor. This is also evident in the autobiography of (U') Nu', which, when translated into English, results in (U') Nu' speaking of himself either as prefix (i.e. Maung Ko, U') plus Nu', or in the third person pronoun, but rarely if ever with T.

10 On the *neik-tha-ya'* work of the Second A-bi'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw, the teacher of both the author of the hagiography and the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, see Thi-la-nan-da (1979:35) and Hla' Tha-mein (1961:162-3).

11 Paravahera (1962:75) says about these 40 objects of meditation: 'These subjects...are almost limitless; for they were adopted in accordance with the variety of the mental dispositions of the aspirants'. King (1980:31-4) has dealt with these at length, 'classified according to types of persons—or perhaps also to the stage or mood a person is in at a particular time—and in terms of the levels of achievement to which each subject can lead when properly meditated upon'. The forty objects of meditation are as follow

D. The four divine states of mind (*bya'ma wi'ha-na*; P. *brahma-vihāra*)

31. Friendliness, 32. compassion, 33. sympathy, 34. equanimity.

E. The four formless stages (*a-nu-pa*; P. *arūpa*)

35. The sphere of infinite space, 36. the sphere of infinite consciousness, 37. the sphere of nothingness, 38. the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.

F. 39. The perception of the loathsomeness of nutriment (*a-ha-zi pa-di'ku-la'tha-nya*, P. *āhāra patikkulā saṅkhā*)

G. 40. The analysis of the loathsomeness of the four physical elements (*sa-du'da-nu'wa'mut-lan*, P. *catud-hatuvavathana*).

VI. The four contemplations (*a-nu'pat-tha-na*, P. *anupassanā*). 'Contemplation on the body' (*ka-ya nu'pat-tha-na*), 'contemplation on feeling' (*wei-da-na nu'pat-tha-na*), 'contemplation on the state of mind' (*seik-la nu'pat-tha-na*), 'contemplation on mental objects' (*da-ma'nu'pat-tha-na*).

MONASTERY OCCUPANTS

Apart from novices and monks one may find any one or more from the following categories living at the monastery: lay stewards (*kat-pi-ya*), nuns (*thi-la'yin*) keeping the Eight or Ten Precepts; and little school boys dressed in white who keep the Five Precepts (*hpo'thu-daw* (mainly in monasteries belonging to the Shweì-gyin sect).

MONASTIC SYLLABUS

Burma (1936:128) includes the following about the monastic syllabus:

Today, as centuries ago, in the monastic school a boy first memorises the 42 letters; he proceeds by way of the Thibongyi to memorising texts such as the Māṅgala Sutta and the Sigalovada and from these to the Dhammapada and the Mahāparinī Sutta. He learns the devotional formulae, the doxologies, the lauds of the Lord Buddha and the daily observances through the medium of the Silas, the Payashikoh, the Payeikgyi (Paritta). An assortment of homilies of the type of the Lokanīti and the Pūtovada may be added according to the taste of the monastic teacher. Instruction in elementary arithmetic and the kogyauing (9x9 table) is usually added. The curriculum was and is directed towards religious ends.

MONK ORDINATION

Monk ordination is variously referred to as 'undergoing monkhood' (*ya-han' hkan de*), 'wear the robes of a monk' (*thin-gan' wut te*), 'take up the moral discipline' (*thai-hka tin de*), or 'rise to monkhood' (*u'ba-zin' tet te*).

MUSEUM CULTURE

KN pointed out that Wi'thu'da's (1982) reference to the present state of Burmese Buddhist culture as a 'museum culture' (see my chapter 3) has no particular significance. Wi'thu'da is highly unorthodox in that as a monk he argues for the reestablishment of cultural institutions which go against the scriptures (with music, etc). KN remarked that Wi'thu'da glossed over the lack of ceremonial involved in the early scriptural novitiation ceremonies in favour of a detailed look at later ceremonial as practised by wealthy traders: thus the novitiation of Yahula, the Buddha's son, was ignored in favour of considering that of a wealthy trader called (U') Pan-di-ta, who became a *ya-han'da* at the age of 7 while having his hair cut for the novitiation. Consequently KN found that the book Wi'thu'da had written was not worthy of his learned title *da-ma sa-ri'ya*.

KN's view of the elaborate novitiation ceremony as customarily aspired to by many Burmese Buddhists (and other ceremonies such as weddings) is a recipe for *amerit* (*a-ku'tho*). Burmese ceremonies are not closed events—500 people may turn up or 2,000. There is a lot of competition over the 'best' ceremony, and with aspirations to perform the best ceremonies possible, the wealthy may do well, but poor sponsors go into debt they are often not able to repay, and their

minds are greatly troubled by it. Sometimes there is only catering for 500 people and 1,000 turn up—then there are fights between couples and many problems arise, and offering with such state of mind is worse than not performing a meritorious deed, for it brings *amerit*. Also, in catering for such large numbers of guests, people go to the market where special deliveries of meat have to be made, and animals are specially killed for the event. It is really 'greed' (*law'ba*) masquerading under the appearance of 'merit' (*ku'tho*). Therefore, KN argues, reestablishing the novitiation of old is to reestablish wrong views and *amerit*ousness. KN points out that the Ma-ha-gan-da-yon Hsa-ya-daw preached against this elaborate ceremonial.

Of course, inclusion of reference to a 'museum period' in the title is intended to illustrate exactly this difference in opinion between the 'WM yaw'gic mentality' and that of other Buddhists in the same environment over the nature of Buddhist tradition: WM yaw'gi are quite prepared to question the knowledge they received from their parents, and are quite ready to set aside customs and innovate ideas and practices that conform more closely to what they see as the core meaning of the scriptures (incl. WM in practice). Other types of Buddhist, on the other hand, prefer to follow guidance of Buddhist customary practices as handed over from their parents. The latter seek to compete in performing the 'best' (most expensive, most elaborate) ceremonial. Buddhists with these different attitudes tend to also have different views of legitimate knowledge and have different attitudes to the changes that colonial government brought as noted in chapter 2.

NEIK-BAN DAT

In his rainy season discourse BK explained how the Centre and the teaching is closely associated with encouraging and conveying the 'neik-ban element' (*neik-ban dat*), which can kill *amerit*ous elements:

The 'purity' period is the period of *neik-ban* elements. With the coming of the big *neik-ban* element period, the strength of the *neik-ban* element is not yet big. It is not yet well developed and it is only 6 years since it started... Another 2,500 years are ahead of us, and 6 years in comparison with 2,500 makes it only at the very beginning. One cannot suddenly become a Streamwinner (*thaw'da-ban*) yet. The *neik-ban* element has to be cultivated. This place, this centre, is in my view a centre which gives birth to the *neik-ban* element, which fulfils the *neik-ban* element... In my view this centre advances the *neik-ban* element.

Where do the 'neik-ban elements' come from?

The *neik-ban* elements are in *neik-ban*... Because Gotama Buddha set the 5,000 year period, the *neik-ban* element of Gotama, the Buddha, is still revolving around. How can persons get this *neik-ban* element?... It can be got from those who have it. The *neik-ban* element must be tapped from those who have it. You will get strong if you tap it. If you get strong this strength of element can conquer all three dangers.

Who possess it?

Who still have this *neik-ban* element? It is now just over 2,500 years after the Buddha's demise yet. Many of the *nat* and *bya'ma* who achieved the path and fruition of holiness after having had the moral laws from the Buddha are still alive. There are spirits (*nat*) and higher beings (*bya'ma*) who remain (*te de*) in the holy states of *thaw'da-ban*, *tha-ga-da-gan* and *a-na-gan*. These *nat* and *bya'ma* have the *neik-ban* element. With that element you must unite, and after uniting, open it. So in this way you must try to make the people realise the true knowledge of impermanence, suffering and non self in this world of people. You must give strength. Make them meditate. Because you make them meditate, if the strength of *neik-ban* element comes up in the human world it is likely to unite with the *neik-ban* element of the saintly *nat* and *bya'ma* who are in their abodes... When these are linked, the *neik-ban* element will come into the whole world. If the *neik-ban* element comes into this world the way that the *neik-ban* ele-

ment came in at the time of the Buddha, it must destroy the amertorious defiling elements' (Ko Le' 1980:561-564).

See also: Five Periods, Enlightenment Period.

NGWEI BA-DEI-THA BIN

A *ba-dei-tha* bin is:

'a tree peculiar to the north island (*nk-ta-ra'ku'ru*), said to produce whatever an applicant may desire; an artificial tree laden with religious offerings; hence, *mi' ba-dei-tha*, *hman ba-dei-tha*, a chandelier; *nyan ba-dei-tha*, a person of versatile intellect; *ba-dei-tha hsat yu ya'tha-lo shi' thi*, an expression applied to a person who is fortunate' (Judson 1953:616).

With the prefix *ngwei*, it comes to mean a fund bearing interest, as used for the support of meditators in the Ma-ha-si Yeik-tha. Socialist government corporation shops are known as *ba-dei-tha* shops (*ba-dei-tha hsaing*).

NU, U'

U' Nu', the first Prime Minister of Burma (1948-62), played an important role in popularising meditation in Burma together with other important government officials (see also Tin, Myanaung U'; Saw Shwei Thaik). His biographical entry reads as follows:

U Nu (U' Nu'); Prime Minister of the Union of Burma. Born May 1907 in Wakema, Myaungmya district; son of U San Htun and Daw Saw Khin; educated Myoma National High School, Rangoon; Rangoon University B.A., 1929; B.L., 1935; President, Rangoon University Students' Union 1935-6; Leader of University Students' Strike, February 1936. Since then came to be affectionately called Kogyi Nu. Joined Dobama Asaiyone with Bogyoke Aung San; founded Nagan (Red Dragon) Book Club; suffered two years imprisonment for anti-British propaganda. Minister for Foreign Affairs 1943; Minister for Information 1944, during Japanese occupation. Vice President, AFPFL 1944. Elected Speaker of Constituent Assembly 1947. Deputy Chairman, Governor's Executive Council, July 1947. U Nu signed Nu-Aitlee Agreement, and became Burma's first Prime Minister on Independence Day January 4, 1948. Has been in that office ever since except for the periods June 12, 1958 to March 1, 1957 when he resigned from Premiership to take up whole time politics, and October 28, 1958 to April 4, 1960 when he proposed General Ne Win to head a Caretaker Government. Elected Member of Parliament from Lanmadaw in 1951. Returned to Parliament from Rangoon East in 1956 and 1956. After the AFPFL split on June 9, 1958 he formed the Clean AFPFL. Changed its name to Union Party March 18, and became its first President; resigned on March 14, but asked to head caretaker Executive Committee for one year (March 20, 1961); Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Home, Democratization of Local Administration, Information and Relief and Resettlement, April 4, 1960. Signed the Sino-Burmese Border Treaty at Peking on October 1, 1960. Awarded Star of the Revolution (Order of the First Degree), December 5, 1960. Sponsored the building of World Peace Pagoda at Yegu, March 1952, the Sixth Buddhist Synod, 1952. Eminent writer and playwright. Publications: *Burma under the Japanese*; *The People Win Through*; *Man, the Wolf of Man*, *Wages of Sin*, etc. Married Daw Mya Yee; has four children. (Who's Who in Burma (1961:117))

NYAN-ZIN

The 'path of insight' (*nyan-zin*) is expounded in a sermon by the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw which he gave ever since his first successful students graduated in Jan 1950. Published as *Progress of insight* (1980c) in Burmese and English, it describes the experiences a successful meditator will have before achieving stream-winner (*thaw'da-ban*) the first of the four holy stages (*a-ri'ya*). Couched in terms of the language of meditational experience, this cannot be easily related to by non-meditators and it is therefore given only to *yaw'gi* who have successfully achieved 'the path of insight' (*nyan-zin*).

Briefly, it expounds 16 stages in the sensation and perceptions of the *yaw'gi* (paraphrased in my own

words and with some telescoped into one): the knowledge distinguishing between mind and matter (and awareness that there is no 'I', only mind and matter); the capacity to distinguish between cause and effect (doubt of past, present & future existence of 'I' is removed); the object of noting disappears at the same time as noting ('I', and everything, is realised to be nothing but 'impermanent' and 'suffering', not worth hanging onto); one becomes aware that becoming and destruction, previously thought to be long developments, are in fact lots of rapid becomings and destructions (ecstasy develops); everything is seen in its aspect of dissolution (strengthening awareness of non-self, suffering, and impermanence); fear occurs because of the rapid dissolution of all phenomena; knowledge of misery is developed through the realisation that all psycho-physical phenomena rapidly dissolve; these are observed as devoid of pleasure and as unreliable; all phenomena are seen as suffering and the desire arises to renounce the body-mind and one attains further energy this way to continue; characteristics of impermanence, suffering and impersonality come to be better appreciated and... pains excessive to bear are encountered which disappear when noted so that equanimity develops; noting becomes rapid and without effort and glimpses of cessation (*neik-ban*) are attained; sudden realization of a fleeting moment of cessation of all phenomenal processes; retrospection occurs over the path of insight and of the holy ones.

PA-RA-MAT-HTA'/PA-RA-MAT

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw (1965:8) defined *pa-ra-mat-hta'* as 'the absolute truthfulness... in full and complete accordance with what is actual, the elementary, fundamental qualities of phenomena', which is in opposition to 'conventional truth' (*tha-mok-ti'*), meaning 'the truthfulness of the customary terms used by the great majority of people, such as "Self exists"'. This is an important concept to the WM *yaw'gi*.

Mendelson (1975:76-7) rightly pointed out that the meaning of 'ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-hta'*) is confused in western literature and that it is used in several somewhat contradictory senses.

In the *Glass Palace Chronicle* (Pe Maung Tin & Luce 1960), we find two references:

'... since the root beginning made by Ashin Punna the elder in the lifetime of the Lord Omniscient, throughout the reigns of the dynasties of the Burmese kingdoms of Tagaung, Tharehikittara, Arimaddana, and Thiripyissaya, there flourished the paramattha order, the samuti order, the sacred writings, their study and intuition.' (p59)

(Anawrahta to Shin Arahanc) 'And thou hast asked—Is there any monk besides myself, a disciple of the Lord? Yes, verily; besides myself there are the paramattha Order and the samuti Order.' (p74)

The latter quote has been interpreted by Mendelson (1975:37) as 'evidence that two other orders of monks existed besides the one to which Shin Arahanc belonged'. It should be pointed out that the 'practice' historian Htei' Hlaing (1981a:53) omits, in his treatment of Shin Arahanc's reference to 'monastic order of the ultimate truth' and 'monastic order of the conventional truth', but merely alleges Shin Arahanc to have said 'Apart from me, there are many other monastic orders [*than-ga'*]. Htei' Hlaing may have omitted this reference because it would have indicated that Shin Arahanc was not a member of the 'monastic order of the ultimate truth' (*pa-ra-mat-hta'* [*than-ga'*]) and therefore could not have been a member of the tradition of Buddhist practice. The terms are also implied in the opposition to 'head of the monastic order' (*tha-tha-na baing*), who was often referred to as 'conventional head of the monastic order' (*tha-mot-ti' tha-tha-na baing*) by general consent of the order, not by appointment of the state' (see Mendelson 1975:115,182). Here use of *pa-ra-mat* and *pa-ra-mat-hta'* involved an element of opposition, where sects falling outside the orbit of

government and approved religion were referred, or referred to themselves, as *pa-ra-mat*.

The term has been interpreted to take on an entirely different meaning when used as a reference to unorthodox sects. While *pa-ra-mat-hia* may be taken as 'good' ultra-orthodox truth, as indeed found in self-reference by WM yaw 'gi at WM centres, the term, when taken to its extremes, means the denial of truth of all that is impermanent, including the monastic order (*than-ga*) and the teachings of the Buddha. Here, indeed, it may be used to deny the monastic order based on conventional ordination its existence. Reference to *pa-ra-mat* at this point becomes a term for off-stream unorthodox opinion. Such use is clear in the case of a sect referred to as *pa-ra-mat*, who deny the order exists and who worship the principle of knowledge. Mendelson (1975:37) said about these terms,

'The term paramattha, sometimes paramat (English transliteration), can mean truth in the ultimate sense, but it is also used derogatorily to describe those whose pursuit of ultimates lures them into nonorthodox extremes. The terms samuti (perhaps from the Pali sammuti) appears to relate to general consent; that is, it was perhaps a division in the Sangha that by common consent was not under the direct control of the king and those monks who supported him... It suffices to point out that not only the Ari but also these two other Sangha factions existed in addition to Shin Arahana's own. Such factions, we suggest, were inherent in the Burmese Sangha from the start.'

Mendelson (1975:107) made reference to his informants' reactions to contemporary *pa-ra-mat* interpretations of the Buddha's doctrine:

'One stated, "Yes, the Hngetwin [Hnet-dwin] work in the paramat [*pa-ra-mat*] sense where nothing really exists, but this is an extreme opinion and it can become a mad one." Another, voicing the usual view of Hngetwin, told me that "they believe there is no merit in feeding the crows by presenting food on altars and pagodas at pwes and festivals and they feel that candles are merely lighting the way for the mice to find the food. When you think of it, it is silly to throw away food so that even the poor cannot have it. The Hngetwin people would have men eat the food which is placed at pagodas, not just throw it away." The monastic Hngetwin sect "make donations without music and pwes" (Mendelson 1975:110).

It could be argued that there is a change in Pali etymology of the term from *paramattha*, meaning ultimate truth, to *paramat*, meaning 'touched, grasped, usually in bad sense: succumbing to, defiled, corrupted...'. Perhaps these two originally distinct terms have come to be collapsed into one in Burmese?

PALI-BURMESE

Pali does not have the same emotional status with western scholars/readers as with Burmese Buddhists; with Burmese Buddhists Pali is closely bound up with their origination as a people and has served for centuries as a sign of learning, but to western scholars it represents but one among many 'dead' languages. Traditionally taught in monasteries to all men, a degree of familiarity with Pali is highly valued in Burmese society as a sign of learning. A reference to the Pali language commonly heard is as 'the original language' (*mu-la-ba-tha*)¹² and Pali has had a profound impact on the Burmese language of today, in respect of grammar and loan words.

Burmese terms with unknown etymologies are apt to be attributed to archaic Pali (which modern western linguistic research has not had the opportunity to confirm), for which the term *paw-ra-na* (P. *porana*) is used. Burmese Buddhists have also until relatively recently written their histories showing a continuous link between the Buddha and his disciples and their contemporary kings and monks; if to the Burmese Pali represents the original language preceding Burmese, western scholars have perceived less unique relationships; Pali is classified as 'a Middle Indo-Aryan language of north Indian origin' which 'seems closely related to the Old Indo-Aryan Vedic and Sanskrit dialects but is apparently not directly descended from either of these', and the Burmese language is classified here as a member of a very different linguistic family, namely the Sino-Tibetan family. And so also Burmese ideas of their origins within the spiritual lineage of the Buddha were dismissed as 'legendary' and 'folklore', and racial-linguistic features were preferred as the classificatory scheme.

In this way historians such as Harvey (1925:307,xvii), irritated in their quest for historical facts in indigenous histories, found that 'perhaps as much as half the narrative told as historical down to the thirteenth century is folk-lore'. History should be about linguistic, geographic, but in particular racial origins and 'the Burmans are a Mongolian race, yet their traditions, instead of harking back to China, refer to India...the surviving traditions of the Burman are Indian because their own Mongolian traditions died out' (Harvey 1925:5). This ignores 'spiritual' in favour of 'racial'/'linguistic' continuity. Htin Aung (1970), in his *Burmese History Before 1287* attempted to resuscitate the Burmese view as represented by Burmese chronicles against Luce's (1959) allegation.¹³

Indiscriminate use by western scholars of the Pali romanisation system for Pali loanwords in the vernacular often goes hand in hand with a somewhat uncritical acceptance of Buddhist texts published in the Pali Text Society series as representative of Theravada Buddhism as a universal category. The Pali Text Society translations are pioneering work, and are not definitive translations. Recently Norman (1989) pointed out not only that at least one text was found in Thailand which was older than the sources from which the Pali Text Society translated—but he pointed out how inaccurate the Pali Text Society translations were in many places. This puts into question the accuracy of much of our understanding of this material.

The point, then, of insisting on using our conventional transcription system to romanise Pali loanwords in Burmese is also to avoid uncritically giving priority to 'our' sense of Pali over 'theirs'.

PA-RA-MI

Pa-ra-mi (P. *pārami*) is translated by Judson as 'an accomplishment or virtue'. Perfection in these leads to the release from rebirths through the achievement of *neik-ban*. The 10 following *pa-ra-mi* are practised by all Buddha-to-be's (*hpa-ya* "laung"): generosity (*da-na*), morality, (*thi-la*), renunciation (*neik-hka-mā*), wisdom (*pyin-nya*), energy (*wi-ri-ya*), forbearance (*hkan-di*), truthfulness (*thit-sa*), resoluteness (*a-deik-hian*), loving kindness (*myit-ta*), and equanimity (*u'pek-hka*). Each of these qualities is represented by one Buddha birth

12 (U) Kaung (1963:10) had a slightly different interpretation of this when he wrote that, 'The Buddhist doctrine was introduced into the country enshrined in a canon of scriptures written in Pali which is for that reason still called the 'original language' (*mu-la-ba-tha*) by the Burmese.'

13 Htin Aung responded to Luce's allegation that 'The Abhira/Dhara legends showing the continuity in the Buddha's Indian lineage with those of Burmese royalty were presumably invented to give Burmans a noble derivation from the Sakyan line of Buddha Gotama himself. But one only has to put a Burman between a North Indian and a Chinese, to see at a glance where his racial connections lie'.

story (*zai*, *jāṭaka*) in particular. The Ten Birth Stories (*zat-gyi* 'hse *bwe*') represent these qualities individually, remembered by a rhyme of their initials *lei - za' - thu' - nei - ma - bu - san - na - wi' - wei*:

Tei-mi'ya' (no. 538, renunciation); *Za-nek-ka'* (no. 539, effort); *Thu'won-na'* Shan (no. 540, loving-kindness); *Nei-mi'* (no. 541, resolution); *Ma-hmo*'tha-da' (no. 546, on wisdom); *Bu-ri-dai* (no. 543, on morality); *San-da'* *Kon-ma-ra'* (no. 542, on forbearance); *Na-ra-da'* (no. 544, on equality); *Wi-du-ra'* (no. 545, on truth) and, finally, *Wei-than-da-ra* (no. 547, on charity). (See end-notes, 'zai').

The 10 *pa-ra-mi* are subdivided into three degrees—ordinary (*yo*'yo' *pa-ra-mi*), *min*' (*u*'pa' *pa-ra-mi*), and eminent (*pa-ra-mat-hi*' *pa-ra-mi*), so that we are left with 3 subdivisions of each, which results in the well-known Thirty Paramis. It is possible to achieve the stage of *a-ra-hat* by practising all of these in low measure, and concentrating on the knowledge *pa-ra-mi* through the practice of *wi*'pat-tha-na' (these are sometimes referred to as 'silent Buddhas'), but in this world system only Gautama Buddha achieved the superior of each of the ten classes. These are interpreted in various ways. For example, in Chit Aung (1981:201) it is given as 'practising the 10 *pa-ra-mi* to the extent of renouncing wealth and goods'; 'practising the 10 *pa-ra-mi* to the extent of giving up one's limbs'; and 'practising the 10 *pa-ra-mi* to the extent of renouncing life.' Aw-ba-tha (1975:365) phrased this slightly differently: 'not to be inclined in mind towards things outside the body', 'not to be inclined towards parts of the body, such as foot, hand or eye', and 'not even be inclined towards one's life.'

Pa-ra-mi is a common attribute of, in particular, the Buddhist monk or the successful meditator, in which case it is said that the person 'has *pa-ra-mi*'. A lack of success in life generally indicates that one 'has no *pa-ra-mi*'. There is no sense of our concept of luck, for this is subsumed in the notions of *pa-ra-mi* and *kan* (P. *kamma*), which follow their own laws of retribution, though we may not be aware of it. In Burmese some common expressions associated with *pa-ra-mi* are: 'having soft *pa-ra-mi*' (i.e. to be immature in the exercise of the *pa-ra-mi*, as a Bodhisat on the eve of becoming a Buddha); 'to fulfil the *pa-ra-mi*' (i.e. to accomplish Buddhahood).

PRECEPTS (SEE THI-LA')

PYIT-SEI-KA' BOK-DA'

'Silent Buddhas' (*pyit-sei-ka' bok-da'*) refers to the way (Wet-let Ma-so'yein U') Telk-tha, in his preface to the Ma-ha-si hagiography, had claimed that monks famous for their meditation in the past, such as the Kin'taw'ya' Hsa-ya-daw and the Min'gun Hsa-ya-daw, were like 'silent Buddhas' in that they practised more for themselves than for teaching their knowledge to others. The implication is that the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw was one of the first to teach meditation on a large scale. The following are some of KN's arguments (drawn out further by myself):

i) The characterisation of these early meditating monks as silent Buddhas is wrong if the author intended to mean that, while the Ma-ha-si did all he could to teach meditation, these other monks in contrast meditated all for themselves. The early monks referred to did travel and preach WM, and therefore on the basis of their efforts they could not be classed as 'silent' Buddhas hugging the knowledge for themselves.

ii) There are two types of silence—active silence (i.e. the teacher does not teach certain things, the teacher does not commit to writing his methodology and experiences), and passive silence (i.e. pupils are not interested, pupils do not hear, pupils have no desire to read written records on meditation). If the meditating monks of the past were not actively silent, then perhaps conditions were such that the pupils passively experienced silence because of adverse conditions. With the country in state of occupation and war during the colonial period—conditions were adverse to the study

of meditation: i.e. people were not prepared to listen. The meditation teachers were thus not silent Buddhas in the scriptural sense by choice, but were—despite their wide travels and preaching—silent in respect to the listeners by circumstances. They did not write down their methods, perhaps because this was not done, or perhaps because they conceived of WM as a very individualised activity suitable in different ways to different individuals at different times rather than a mass method.

iii) With colonial occupation and war terminating, with independence looming on the horizon and increased support by wealthy and powerful Burmese Buddhists setting up national and local meditation centres and umbrella organisations—circumstances were right for WM, and it became the right time for people to listen. Furthermore, with new technology—transport (airplane and train), improved communications (telephone, tape-recorders, radio, printing presses)—it has become far easier to carry out messages across a wider geographical area to a wider range of people. Thus the Ma-ha-si appeared at a time that the conditions were unlike that met by earlier meditating monks. Attributing silence to the individual volition of earlier monks than the Ma-ha-si may therefore be a misinterpretation of their silence;

iv) If it be a precondition that modern meditation teachers teach successfully, it is not possible to argue that—despite their support and favourable conditions—their teachings come across with everyone. The capacity to induce enlightenment in others can not be measured objectively since those with less knowledge cannot assess the higher stages of knowledge achieved, and so no one can say for sure who has and who has not achieved enlightenment;

v) Meditation depends on a deep knowledge of individual human psychology for the adaptation of a large range of individual meditation methods to the right individual in the right conditions. This is what the Buddha had with his quality of *that-bin-nyu'ta* nyan, and his skill was to apply the right medicine in the right way at the right moment to the right person—there was no universal solution for all. Individuals have different behaviour (*sa-yeik*), different sense faculties (*cin-da-yeik*), different perfections carried over from former lives (*pa-ra-mi*), etc. Mass meditation according to a single method in a single teaching tradition by a variety of teachers (some with more aptitude than others), though undoubtedly benefitting many, is unlikely to benefit all. For example, the requirement at the Ma-ha-si Centre that all *yau*'gi should practice meditation 20 hours a day need not accord with all persons. KN compared the Buddha's teaching to a sniper bullet, whereas modern mass-meditation is more like shot, where you do not know who is going to be hit when.

ROYAL SUPPORT FOR SCRIPTURAL LEARNING

Royalty has always had an important influence on literary efforts in the religious sphere throughout Burmese history. Not only did they provide the monastic order (*than-ga*) with the necessary material support by means of which the monastic order could study (some western historians have even argued that royalty ruled through the act of charity, and that Burmese history consists largely of recording the acts of merit), but they actively sought to encourage it. This began with the efforts by A-naw-ra'hta after conversing with (Shin) A-ra'han, whose words were decisive in the attempts by A-naw-ra'hta to conquer Tha-hton for the scriptures:

'There are three elements of the lord's religion: without the scriptures there can be no study, without study there can be no [practice and] without which there can be no intuition. The scriptures, the Three Pitakas, thou hast not yet. Only when thou hast obtained them, sending gifts and presents and entreating them of diverse countries which have relics of the Lord's body and the books of the Pitakas, may the religion last long'. (Pyin-nya Tha-mi' 1861:77).

Upon (Shin) A-ra'han's recommendations, A-naw-ra'hta established scriptural learning firmly among the Burmese monks, and Pali scholarship associated with Theravada Buddhism took over from Sanskrit scholar-

ship. Purification of the scriptures and religious texts were carried out by royalty. Bo'daw-hpa-ya' (1781-1819) made a collection of all available inscriptions, of which he had copied some word for word, and some of which he altered in spelling and content. Mln'don' organised the Fifth Buddhist Synod which started in 1871. The secular and religious chronicles were largely produced under influence from the king.

This concern about scriptural learning as crucial to the maintenance of religion is evident also in the *Tha-tha-na lin-ka-na'* (Ma'ha-da-ma' Thin-gyan A-mat-gyi' 1831:234): 'According to the saying "Only scriptural learning (*pa-di'yat*'), which is the texts and scriptures, is the necessary precondition for the *tha-tha-na'*, truly, it is only by scriptural study that practice (*pa-di'bat*) and intuition (*pa-di'wei-da'*) can be fulfilled ... Therefore, only if scriptural learning flourishes will the *tha-tha-na* flourish.'

It is further pointed out that the *tha-tha-na* will be broken in 5 respects. The first marks the disappearance of scriptures, until even the Buddha birth stories such as *Wei-than-da-ra* slowly disappear. The second concerns the disappearance of Buddhist practice (*pa-di'pat-ti'*) when the last monk observing the 4 basic laws (generally referred to as *a-bat*, but more specifically as *pa-na-zi'ka'*: no sexual intercourse, no stealing, no killing, no claim to supernatural power) disappear. The third concerns the disappearance of Buddhist intuition (*pa-di'wei-da'*), when the last lowest grade holy one (*a-ri'ya thaw'da-ban*) disappears. The fourth concerns the disappearance of *lein-ga' tha-tha-na*, caused by the disappearance of the 8 requisites among monks. The fifth concerns the disappearance of *da-tu' tha-tha-na*, when there is no one worshipping the Buddhas relics, and it is impossible to achieve *da-tu' neik-ban* (see also *Aw-ba-tha* 1975:618). This same account, with some variations (reversal between practice and scriptural learning), is repeated in *Hpa-ya'hpyu Hsa-ya-daw* (1831:296).

SAW SHWEI THAIK

First President of Independent Burma who, together with Prime Minister U' Nu' and other ministers (e.g. Tin, Myanaung U'), did much to further the popularity of meditation in Burma. His biographical entry reads as follows:

'Sao Shwe Thaik [Saw Shwei Thaik]; former President of the Union of Burma. Born 1896; son of Sir Sao Mawng, Sawbwa of Yawngwhwe; School for the Sons of Shan Chiefs, Taunggyi; served in the Burma Rifles during World War I and on the North East Frontier of Burma 1920-23; selected as Sawbwa of Yawngwhwe, October 1927; confirmed March 8, 1929; recalled to military duty 1939; served in Burma Army until 1942; member of Constitution Drafting Committee; served as President, Constituent Assembly, 1947; elected the first President of the Union of Burma 1948-52; elected MP Chamber of Nationalities, 1947-60; Speaker, Chamber of Nationalities, 1952-60; awarded the Orders: Agga Maha Thray Sithu; Agga Maha Thiri Thudhamma; led Burmese Goodwill mission, Czechoslovakia, August, 1960. Married Sao Hearn Hkam, sister of the Sawbwa of North Hsenwi State; eight children.' (Who's who in Burma (1961:164-5))

SHIN

Houk Sein (1978:713) attributes three meanings to *shin*: a recluse or Buddhist monk; a term of compellation used by a woman to persons rather superior whether male or female, sometimes pronounced (*shin'*) at the end of a sentence; (from *a-shin*, 'lord') a title prefixed to the name of a holy inspired man or ascetic. It is also used in the title of some spirits (e.g. U' Shin Gyi'). In *MAA* (1980:56) a further meaning is attributed in the sense of 'owner of' (e.g. head of the household, *ein-shin*). In English the word also has a large range of meanings, most of which are somewhat more secular: 1. master, ruler, chief, prince, sovereign; 2. feudal superior; 3. master (in the sense of 'lord & master'); 4. domi-

nant planet; 5. God; 6. exclamation of surprise (Oh Lord); 7. Christ; 8. nobleman, peer of the realm; 9. members of a board commissioned for duty by the high State office....etc.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

The designation South East Asia is of relatively recent origin as part of a comprehensive strategic classification for that part of Asia formerly known more globally as the East Indies. The other terms in this classification system are South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan) and the Far East (China, Korea and Japan). There are differences in the areas these terms cover in different European languages (for example, in the German classification Burma is sometimes treated as part of South Asia). This designation came into general use during the second World War in 1943 in reference to a theatre of war, but it has now also come to signify a distinct cultural and geographical region. 'Southeast' is American usage, while 'South-East' was used by the British Navy (Hall 1968:3). It is common to subdivide South East Asia into *Mainland* and *Insular SEA*. *Mainland SEA* is a term used for the area of Indo-China—the area historically under French colonial control including Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam—together with Burma, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. *Insular SEA* is a term used for the area comprising Indonesia and the Philippines.

THA-GA-DA-GAN

The 'once-returner' (*tha-ga-da-gan*) is free from coarse sensuous craving and coarse ill-will, and will attain arahatship to enter nibbana after at most two existences in the world of human beings and devas (Ma-ha-si 1980a:47).

THA-MA-HTA'

'Concentration' (*tha-ma-hita'* or *tha-ma-di'*) has many complex meanings. In *Wi'thok-di mek* it is referred to as 'onepointedness of moral thought' (Pe Maung Tin 1921:5-98-100). Its main characteristic is 'not-wavering' as is in the state of happiness and bliss. Various descriptions are made of it ranging from 'the one kind' through to 'the five kinds'. The Ma-ha-si (1981c:98) distinguished between 'fixed (absorption) concentration' (*samatha appanā jhāna*), 'access concentration' (*upacāra kammathāna*), 'insight momentary concentration' (*vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*), and 'momentary concentration'.

THAN-GI'KA'

Than-gi'ka': from Pali *sangha* 'Order' and *-ika* 'belonging to' or 'connected with'. *Aw-ba-tha* (1975:570) distinguishes four types of monastic property:

(i) *than-mok-hi-bu-lā than-gi'ka'* (Pali *sammukkhābhūta*, 'Being face to face with, confronted') - Arriving at in town or village, and offering saying 'I offer this to the Sangha', it concerns only the members of the order present, and there is no need to follow distribution to the order of the whole town or village.

(ii) *a-ya-ma-hita' than-gi'ka'* (Pali *āyamaṇi*, 'to stretch, extend, stretch out, draw out') - Going into a monastery, offering to the monks present, saying 'I offer this to the order' (the order of the whole monastery must accept it).

(iii) *ae-du'dek-tha than-gi'ka'* (P. *catudisā sanghika*) - Entering a monastery where there is one monk, when offering many things, saying 'I offer these to the order', if he knows the Vinaya, and he accepts the robes accepting that they are his, he alone owns them. There is no sin in this. On the other hand, if he accepts them as *than-gi'ka'* property, and believes that he does not own them, wherever it gets to it will remain *than-gi'ka'*...

(iv) *ae-du'dek-tha than-gi'ka'* (heading as above) - If the offerings are things like the more weighty and important utensils (*ga-yu'ban*), such as the monastery, and so forth, these types of things should not be distributed when offered to the order, they are owned by the

'The ten precepts' (*da-tha' thi-la'*) - as the eight precepts but with no. 7 split into two and the additional no. 10 being not to accept gold or silver.

TI'PI'TA-KA'

The Buddhist Pali Canon (*Ti'pi'ta-ka'*) is referred to as the collection of the '*Pi'ta-ka'* three heaps' (*Pi'ta-ka' thon' bon*). They include: monastic rules (*Wi'ni'pi'ta-ka'* or Pali *Vinaya Pitaka*), the Buddha's teachings in conventional terms for the welfare of beings (*Thok-lan pi'ta-ka'*, P. *Sutta Pitaka*), and the actual facts of things as they truly are in ultimate reality (*A-bi'da-ma pi'ta-ka'*, P. *Abhidhamma*).

TIN, MYAN-MA A-LIN* U*

This politician, like many of the immediate post-independence ministers, was deeply involved in the organization of the Ma-ha-si meditation centre (he was vice President of the BTNA). I met him during my field-work in Rangoon. His biographical entry is as follows:

'The Myanma Alin U Tin (Myan-ma A-lin* U* Tin). Politician. Born August 17, 1897 in Kyangin, Henzada district; joined the New Light of Burma Press 1920 and promoted accountant 1923; promoted manager, 1933; during Japanese occupation was member, Supreme Court, 1942-48; elected to Constituent Assembly, Theinbyu, 1947; Minister for Finance and Revenue 1948; Honorary Treasurer, and member of Executive Committee, AFPFL 1945-58; Minister for Finance and Revenue, Trade Development and Civil Supplies, April 4, 1949; Minister for Finance and Revenue April 2, 1950; elected to Chamber of Deputies from Shwebo 1951. In government as minister until military takeover 62. Vice President, Sasana Nuggaha Association; member, Buddha Sasana Council. (*Who's Who in Burma* (1961: p182))'

TINKER

One of the earliest references to the post-World War II increase in interest in meditation in Burma is Tinker's (1957:166),

'From early in the twentieth century a considerable religious revival was noticeable. One example was the Young Men's Buddhist Association which, under the leadership of U May Oung, continued with religious work even after some of its members became absorbed in politics. Another development was associated with U Kanti, the hermit of Mandalay Hill.'

U Kanti was closely involved in propagating meditation. Tinker proceeded to delineate the three phases through which this Religious revival went,

'The religious revival may be said first to have stressed the social-obligation side of Buddhism, charity and the giving of alms. During this phase many institutions were founded and endowed. Then, as the prosperity of the 1920's was succeeded by the depression of the 1930's, the emphasis was placed more upon the moral aspect of Buddhism, the observance of the precepts and conformity with the rules of conduct.'

The third and final period of the Revival, according to Tinker, had to do with meditation,

'As will be seen, this in turn has been followed up by a third phase during the independence period in which supreme emphasis is placed upon meditation and the collation of the sacred texts. Many would say that in this return to meditation, Burmese Buddhism may attain a new and higher plane.'

Though Tinker devotes considerable discussion to the events surrounding the founding of the BSC (BNTA) and the organization of the Sangayana, he only very briefly noted the organization of meditation sessions by the BSC (BNTA) at the Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha and we do not find names of individual teachers or reference to named styles of meditation.

Tinker ordered the development of the revival following Buddhaghosa's summary of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely of *charity, morality and meditation*; this follows exactly the same order in which many Burmese meditators perceive Buddhist action as having historically been subject to differential

emphasis (see chapter 3). I do not know whether Tinker observed this himself or whether he reiterated a Burmese view here. Certainly the notion that different periods of socio-political organisation and economic circumstances should coincide with differential emphasis on different religious actions is an intriguing one which still requires answering.

TITLES: LAY

Instead of using their names Burmese will tend to use (and refer to themselves) by a title, use of which depends on context: U* ('Uncle') with either *gyi'lei* (big/small) suffixed, Daw ('Auntie'), Ba' ('Father') with either *gyi'dwei* (eldest/youngest) suffixed, A-hpwa' ('Grandmother') or A-hpo' ('Grandfather') with *gyi'* suffixed, Ko ('Elder Brother') with either *gyi'lei/lat* (big/small/middle) suffixed, Maung ('Younger Brother') with either *nge/lei* (young/small) suffixed, A-ma' ('Sister') with either *gyi'lei/lat* suffixed, Hnit-ma' or Nyl-ma ('Younger Sister') with *lei'nge* suffixed. Many of these kin-titles are frequently (not unlike the title Hsa-ya-daw becoming a name) also used as part of the name proper (as in, for example, in the name San' Maung (Young Cool Younger Brother), which may be prefixed with any of the male titles in the list above including Maung, which would make *Maung/Ko or U* + San' Maung*. It should be noted that the U* of the monks (as in A-shin U* Pyin-nya) and the U* in lay names should be, despite having the same pronunciation, written differently. But many are not aware of this.

TITLES: MONKS

The topic of monk's names and titles have hardly been addressed in the anthropological literature on Burma. *Hsa-ya-daw* could either be translated as 'teacher of royalty' or as 'holy teacher'. As 'teacher of royalty' it refers to a title bestowed by the king on the monastic teacher of his youth. The shift towards today's meaning as 'holy teacher' would appear to have been initiated during the 19th century by King Min'don' (the same king who liked to meditate), who 'liberalised its usage:

King Mindon was...criticized for his extensive conferment of the title of Sayadaw or 'royal teacher.' Originally this title was reserved for the monk who was the actual tutor of the king, or who had been the king's tutor when he was still a prince, but in the course of centuries the title came to be conferred on those monks who were regularly consulted by the king on matters pertaining to the religion. The reign of Mindon was especially rich in great monks of immense learning, and the king honored them all as royal teachers. This made the title cheap and prompted the people in Lower Burma to apply it to some of their own monks, without the king's sanction (Htin Aung 1966:18-9).

Today it is used in the sense of 'holy teacher' in two distinct ways: as an honorific title for monks, and as an element in their monastic names. Of course it should be noted that perhaps such distinction between name and title should not be made here because—unlike the distinction between 'name' (*na-me*) and 'title' (*bwe*) with reference to laity—what we translate variously as 'name' or 'title' with respect to monks are both comprised by the same Burmese term 'title' (*bwe*). *for als*

Nevertheless, let us take those designations unambiguously referring to particular monks to be 'names', and honorifics and embellishments to these as 'titles'. Hla' Tha-mein (1961:317,324) provides two indices of monk names: of monk ordination names (*ya-han'daw-mya' bwe'daw-zin*), and of names 'that follow the sense of perception' (*a-mwat-la' tha-nya-zin*); the latter are, according to him, 'names which are taken from the monastery, birth-place, etc'. Thus, the monk whose original name as novice and young monk was (Shin) Nya-na', later came to be known as Le-di Hsa-ya-daw after the forest in which he had his monastery donated. Forest monks often take the name of the secluded forest in which they meditated (e.g.

also Kyaung-ban" Hsa-ya-daw after Kyaung-ban" forest) or the caves (e.g. Hngat-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw from the Hngat-dwin" caves).

Hsa-ya-daw here has become an intrinsic reference in the latter name. Yet it is a title if we were to refer to him as (Hsa-ya-daw) Nya-na'. While Nya-na' here is not unlike our sense of personal name, in that it denotes the identity of a specific individual (having often also been chosen by using astrological 'individualist' principles as discussed in Houtman 1982), the second type of name denotes more our sense of 'surname' in that it often (though not always) deals with continuity: thus the later incumbents of the Le-di monastery are known respectively as the 'Second' (*du'ti'ya'*), the 'Third' (*ta'ti'ya'*) Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, etc., with the original founder being referred to as the 'First' (*pa-hla-ma'*) (as in *Pa-hla-ma'* Maung" Daung" Hsa-ya-daw), or simply as 'the original' (*mu-la'*), as in *Mu-la'* Zei-da-wun Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw).

It is often suggested that reference to a monk as Hsa-ya-daw becomes appropriate, both as a title and as part of the name, for monks who are either over 10 years in monkhood, or are in charge of their own monasteries, in which case it could be interpreted to mean simply 'abbot'. However, there are no simple rules as to when a monk should be referred to by the designation *Hsa-ya-daw* or as the inferior *U"zin"*; I knew a monk in charge of his own monastery and of well over 10 years standing as a monk, who was sometimes referred to as *Hsa-ya-daw*, sometimes as *U"zin"*.

Today *Hsa-ya-daw* is routinely used for all senior monks. As a rule of thumb: as we have already noted, as a title it comes first, and as part of the name it comes last. *Hsa-ya-daw* becomes an integral part of his name only relatively late in his monastic career, if ever.

When asking someone whether the monk one wishes to see is in his monastery (which he presides over), it is considered impolite to refer to him by either name, whether *Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw* or (*Hsa-ya-daw U"*) *Thaw"ba-na'*; here reference should be made to an elaboration of the title, namely 'Holy Teacher Master Great' (*Hsa-ya-daw A-shin-hpa-ya"gyi"*). KN interprets this reference as *ba-dan-ta'*, translated into Burmese from the Pali *bhante* meaning 'Venerable' (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921-5:498).

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION, WORLD PLAN

The rationality employed in dedicating scarce resources towards the urgent purpose of meditation (see chapter 5) is something the Burmese WM movement shares with the transcendental movement, as evident in the 'world plan' of the latter, sharing a clear sense of quantification of success against quantified resources:

'The objective of the world plan is to train, as quickly as possible, enough teachers of TM and SCI so that there will be one teacher for every 1,000 persons. The first phase of this bold project is to open 3,600 SCI [science of creative intelligence] teachers-training centres in the major population centres of the world, irrespective of political and geographical boundaries. This will provide one center for every one million people. Each of these centres will train 1,000 teachers and maintain their strength through refresher courses. In this manner it is hoped that the 3.6 billion people in the world will, within a few years, have the 3.6 million teachers needed to provide one teacher for every 1,000 persons. Already almost 4,000 teachers have been trained, and many of the 3,600 centres have begun their activities.' (Forem 1974:10).

U'PA-GOK, SHIN

The canonical Pali works do not recognise *U'pa-gok* (Upagutta), but an account of the encounter between him and Ma Nat (Mara) is included in the Burmese chronicle *Ma-ha-ya-za-win-daw-gyi"*, (Vol I, Rangoon: Myan-ma Thu"dei-tha-na", 1960:pp83-89, sections 122-

128). Hla Pe (1984:52-3) has the following to say about Shin *U'pa-gok*,

Upagutta, it is said, dwells in a tiered bronze mansion at the bottom of the Southern Ocean, that is on the south side of Mt Meru. Mt Meru is situated in the centre of the four great islands or continents: the Eastern, the Western, the Northern and the Southern. The last is known as Jambudipa, the noblest of all the islands, of which the Theravadin claim that their countries form a part. He came to fame during the reign of King Asoka, 269BC-232 BC, the powerful sovereign of Magadha Empire with its capital at Paraliptta, which is the present city of Patna in Bihar in India.

The king built on the river bank a great shrine and enshrined the relics of the buddha in it. Similar sacred edifices were also set up throughout the Jambudipa island, altogether 84,000 in all. He ardently wished, so the story goes, to reverse the great shrine for seven years, seven months and seven days, but the king's heart was sorely troubled by the thought of Mara, who, he anticipated, was bound to try to upset his plans in way or another. So he asked thousands of monks he had invited for the occasion to name one who could spike Mara's gun. One monk replied that no one but an arhat or a saint called Upagutta would be able to beat Mara in his own game. The king sent two monks for the Saint. He came in due course. As expected Mara appeared and tried his best to commit all the sacrilegious acts he could muster. But he was worsted at every turn by Upagutta. He also tamed Mara into an angel, all throughout the holy period of Asoka's paying devotional reverence into his great shrine.

It because of Shin *U'pa-gok's* power over Ma Nat that he is propitiated at Buddhist ceremonies

Before the beginning of a religious ceremony Burmans take precautionary measures by worshipping and supplicating Upagutta to deter Mara from doing any mischievous deed to spoil it. This was done, as you will note, before our initiation ceremony. They also would, through a propitiator as their medium invoke Upagutta every time rain threatens either before or during an open air dramatic performance, to prevent Mara from indulging in his spoil-sport tactics. Mara, the ruler of the sixth celestial abode, is feared by all the celestial beings including Sakka and the rain-god. They all fled when Mara appeared with his hordes to claim the throne from the Buddha just before he attained Enlightenment. Dramatic performances are normally staged during the dry season but unseasonable rain does fall sometimes during this period in Burma.

There are also cults associated with *U'pa-gok*, and a former minister of defence travelled around the Rangoon area with Shin Upagok statue. I have also observed statues being floated onto the Irrawaddy on little floats, about which Hla Pe (1984:53) said the following:

At the end of every Buddhist Lent (rainy season), they launch 'fire rafts' in the river, a wonderful scene of illumination. As soon as it is dark, the villagers or townsfolk row out into the mid-stream and set adrift a multitude of little floats of bamboo or banana stems, each carrying little oil lamps or little candles. The decor and the contents of these rafts as well as the time for launching them vary from locality to locality. In Moulmein the rafts are larger and they carry, apart from the lights, either a little mansion or an alms-bow containing offerings of food such as various kinds of jam, and slices of fruits and similar items, but no flesh of any kind. Some people choose dawn to launch their rafts. In one area outside Moulmein I have been told on authority that the people won't set adrift their floats until the time the monks usually go round for receiving food, approximately between seven and nine in the morning.

The phenomenon of (Shin) *U'pa-gok* has been described in C.H. Duroiselle, 'Upagutta et Mara', *Extract du Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, Janvier-Juin, 1984; Father Eugene Denis *La Lokkapannatti et les idées cosmologiques du Bouddhisme ancien* (unpublished doctorate, 1975).

WA

Many have translated *wa* as 'Buddhist Lent' (e.g. Spiro 1970:222-4), which is deceptive. Christian Lent (Lent comes from ME 'spring time'—in Dutch spring = 'lente') is defined as 'a penitential preparation for Easter' which:

In the Western Church...begins on ash Wednesday, 6 1/2 weeks before Easter, and provides for a 40-day fast (Sundays are excluded) in imitation of Christ's fasting in the wilderness... Since apostolic times a period of preparation and fasting has been observed before the Easter festival. It was a time of preparation of candidates for Baptism and a time of penance for sinners. In the early century is fasting rules were strict, as they still are in the Eastern Church. In the west, rules have gradually been relaxed. The strict law of fasting among Roman Catholics was dispensed during World War II, and only Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are kept as Lenten fast days. But the emphasis on penitential practice remains. (Enc. Br. 15th ed. 1980, Macropædia, 'Lent')

Buddhist *wa-zo* was instituted by the Buddha (Christian Lent is in imitation of Christ but he did not institute it) primarily for a practical reason, namely to prevent unnecessary travelling by monks from destroying crops during the rainy season, when the newly planted crops are most vulnerable to destruction by people on the move. There is no special fasting involved (in Christianity there is), and it has no significance as a period of preparation for a major ritual (as Easter in Christianity).

The term *wa* is derived from Pali *vassa* (Hkun' Myin' 1968), meaning 'rain' or 'rainy season'. Buddhist *wa* lasts throughout the rainy season which starts on the first day after the full moon of the Burmese month of *Wa-zo* (the month corresponding to our month June/July, which is named by the same name as the 'rainy season'). On the full moon of *Wa-zo* four special events took place pertaining to the Buddha: he was born, he renounced into the forest, he preached his first sermon, and he ascended to Ta-wa-dein-tha heaven (Aw-ba-tha 1975:550). The rainy season ends on the first day after the full moon during the month of *Tha-din* "gyut. Because every three years a thirteenth month (a 'second *wa-zo*' or *du'ti'ya' wa-zo*) is intercalated (referred to as *wa hta thi*, 'adding a *wa* month') between the 4th and 5th month, the total *wa* period is lengthened by a month to four months every three years, thus lasting till October instead of September.

The counting of *wa* is important to determine hierarchy within the monastic order as already noted. The place of each *wa* was carefully recorded for the Buddha, who is thought to have spent his 45 rainy seasons in 17 differently named places (Aw-ba-tha 1975:549-550). It is possible for a monk to request dispensation from the duties of the rainy season (*wa ban thi*) on the following three accounts: in invitation to collect charity, in invitation to preach, in invitation to worship (Aw-ba-tha 1975:550). Judson (1966:962) defined it as 'an annual period of three months during which religious observances are strictly enjoined'. Smith (1965:19) observed it to be a period of 'reduced social activity'.

The following are some linguistic expressions associated with *wa*: outside the rainy season (*wa-ba*) vs inside the rainy season (*wa-win*), taking up residence for the rainy season (*wa kat thi*), entering the rainy season (*wa win thi*), at the beginning of the rainy season (*wa-u*), keeping the rainy season (*wa zo i*), terminating the rainy season (*wa kon thi*, *wa kyut thi*, *wa htwet thi*), breaking the rainy season without good cause (*wa kyo* "thi, *wa pauk thi*, *wa pyet thi*, *wa pyat thi*), keep abstinence during the rainy season (*wa shaung thi*).

(1) WEIK-ZA,

MA-HA-GAN-DA-RI/SU-LA-GAN-DA-RI

The way the distinction between *ma-ha gan-da-ri weik-za* and *su-la' gan-da-ri weik-za* was explained to me was that the former had practised successfully both concentration (*tha-ma-ha*) and WM meditation, and were therefore holy ones (*a-ri'ya*) for whom there can be no back-sliding. The latter, on the other hand, had a little success in concentration meditation, but none (or no desire in practicing) WM. However, Aw-ba-tha (1975:191) gives the following meanings. *Su-la' gan-da-ri weik-za* is 'someone such as a sorcerer (*hmaw hsa-ya*), a medicine man (*pa-yaw* "ga' hsa-ya, a-kyan" hsa-ya), a black magician (*auk-lan* "hsa-ya" hsa-ya) who arranges for lower spirits such as the 40 demons (*hpok-gyi*), the 99 sorcerers (*ka-wes*), the 37 nats, etc... to be drawn to persons by means of their knowledge of cabalistic squares (*in*, *ain*, (*hka* "hle"), sacred words (*man-dan*), verses (*ga-hla*), amulets under spells (*man-ta-ra* "lei-hpwe"). The *ma-ha gan-da-ri weik-za*, on the other hand, are 'those who have achieved the benefits of the *theik-di'* who have become sages (*weik-za*, *zaw-gyi*, and *ta-ba'zhi*) by means of the upper spirits such as the 21 *dei-wi* beginning with (*Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw*) the 5 guardian rulers of the *tha-tha-na* (*tha-tha-na zaung* "nat min" gyi" nga" ba"), the guardians of the four worlds (*sa-du' law* "ka'pa-la" nat min" gyi" lei" ba"), and Bo'daw Tha-gya" Min". See also Mendelson 1981.

WM AND HISTORY

The history that arises from the historical description of WM is a particular type of history—history of practice (*pa-di'pat-ti' tha-maing*). To cast this argument in terms of our polarities posed in the introduction—no 'WM history' (*wi'pat-tha-na tha-maing*) in contradistinction to 'concentration history' (*tha-ma-ha*) exists; no 'meditation history' (*pa-wa-na tha-maing*) in contradistinction to 'morality' (*thi-la'*) or 'charity' (*da-na'*) history exists. This may be interpreted as indicative of any one or more of the following:

i) Prior to this century WM had not been regarded or practised as a specialist activity, and was not particularly differentiated from other 'practice' activities, such as 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-ha*) and ascetic practices (*du-din*). Hence, it is not possible to write about WM in particular, because there is not sufficient historical evidence of its dedicated practice on the basis of present cognitive categories, and it has become lumped with all other in 'practice'.

ii) WM today, though presented as a distinct activity, is still not really distinct. Today WM is distinguished as an activity distinct from 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-ha*), from 'morality' specialisms (such as taking special additional precepts) and the excesses of 'charity'. Yet WM is also per definition an act of holistic 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*), in the sense that any successful accomplishments in this field are necessarily based on a certain foundation in all other mainstream recommended types of Buddhist action—'charity', 'morality' and 'concentration'. Meditators are referred to as *yaw"gi* a term popularly used also for persons 'who apply themselves' not only to WM but to a variety of moral and charitable practices.

iii) WM history is more comfortably written in terms of 'practice' (*pa-di'pat-ti*), because historically monastic specialisation was conceived along the 'practice' vs 'scriptural learning' division, and this obviously—in the face of a lack of historical records—allows conceptualisation of WM history otherwise impossible to achieve.

iv) 'Practice' in opposition to 'scriptural learning' is a good way of describing WM because all forms of practice share the fundamental inhibition in 'scriptural learning', which may lead to distraction in practice.

WM AND OTHER KNOWLEDGE

King (1964:30) put the Burmese opposition between WM and other types of knowledge thus:

'It is often urged, for example, that meditation will provide or substitute for the answers to intellectual ques-

tions about Buddhist doctrines. If one finds certain doctrines unbelievable, or raises logical difficulties with regard to them, he is recommended to meditation which it is said will either answer them, i.e. convince him of the truth of Buddhist doctrine, or lift him above interest in such questions. It is in practice that one learns truth; truth is gained by realization, not analysis'.

Elsewhere King (1964:29) noted how the Buddhism of the WM *yau* 'gi is about 'ultimate truth', i.e. it is about 'a truth too great, too radically different, too absolutely certain to be properly handled in the ordinary language and thought'.

WI'PAT-THA-NA DU-RA'/GAN"DA'DU-RA'

A similar distinction to the *pa-ri'ya-ti-ti' / pa-di'pat-ti'* distinction is 'the burden of WM / the burden of book learning' (*wi'pat-tha-na du-ra' / gan'da' du-ra'*). The latter distinction is less commonly used in contemporary Burmese language. This emphasis on practice over scriptural learning is evident in Buddhist movements in other countries also, as seen in, for example, the biography of the Tibetan Yogi Milarepa (Evans Wentz 1951:viii):

"In Milarepa's *Biography* It is shown that the yogic path to Supramundaneeness is transcendent over intellectually shaped formulas appertaining to salvation, and that it is ever open to all of human kind, irrespective of religious affiliation. In Milarepa's view, none of the world's methods of intellectual development are essential to the attainment of Wisdom, Right Knowledge was, for him, not to be won by study of books, nor by making professions of faith. ... Of these things Milarepa bore witness as follows:-

*Accustomed long to meditating on the Whispered Chosen Truths, I have forgot all that is said in written and in printed books.

"Accustomed long to application of each new experience to mine own growth spiritual, I have forgot all creeds and dogmas.

"Accustomed long to know the meaning of the Wordless, I have forgot the way to trace the roots of verbs, and source of word and phrases."

WIN

Win could be either interpreted as the equivalent of Pali *vamsa*, 'race, succession, descent', meaning thereby 'a pedigree of persons, places or things' (see chapter 3 on the 7 types of chronicles (*win*)). Or it could be interpreted as the Burmese *win* in the sense of 'member', or Burmese *win de* in the sense of 'to enter, go or come in'.

A clear statement on *tha-tha-na win* comes from Aung Myin' (1980:8):

"Nats and humans who have become disciples, and the lords who have become monks, all entered the *tha-tha-na*, and they have become 'members of the *tha-tha-na*.'" According to this opening (*Hko!-da'-ka-pa-hi'a* *A-hi'a-ga-hi'a*) with the performance of the act of worship they became at the same time disciples and monks who were 'members of the *tha-tha-na*'. (reference is here to the Pali phrase deva manussa upesaka bhavana...).

As soon as the humans of the world performed the acts of worship, there came into existence 'members of the *tha-tha-na*'. If not, then they became monks.

A person who becomes a member of a Party, will not have become a member merely by taking membership. Just like this person must observe the rules of this association or party, so the person who wants to become a Buddha *tha-tha-na* member is not finished with reciting the Three Jewels, but requires to follow and observe the rules of morality—'

In other words, to be a *tha-tha-na* win one must not only worship but also take the moral precepts seriously.

The Ma-ha-si (in Thi-la-nan-da 1979:136) noted that in Indonesia there were no monasteries that are 'member of the Buddha tha-tha-na' (bok-da'tha-lha-na-win hpon-gyi" kyaung" hu yawi' a-be hma shi' ba mi ni"). For further examples of tha-tha-na

win see: Hla Baing (1976:3a) who speaks of 'famous *tha-tha-na* win persons' (*tha-tha-na win pok-ko gyaw*). Hi'tei-di (1981:31) also includes the notion 'member of the lineage of *tha-tha-na*'.

Other common expressions involving the term *win* are: 'member of history' (*tha-maing" win*)—e.g. in *Thi-la-nan-da* (1979:1,12) the Mahasi is described as 'a person will become a member of history' (*tha-maing" win hpyit mi" pok-ko*); 'member of Christianity' (*hka-rit-yan ba-tha win*)—e.g. in *Sa-bei Beik-man* (1971:21) P. Monin is described as *hka-rit-yan ba-tha win*; 'inside the law', i.e. legitimate (*ta-ya" win*); 'inside the *ta-ya" age*', i.e. adult; 'inside holiness', i.e. to belong to royalty or government—e.g. *taw win yek kan" the is* 'a royal weaver, or weaver to his Majesty' (Judson 1953); *lu ya win*, 'to be of an age to begin to associate with men'; *mein-na" hpaw win* or *a-pyo" hpaw win*, 'to be of an age to begin to associate with women', i.e. when girls first menstruate; 'Party Member' (*pa-ti win*); 'Member of a sect' (*gaing" win, gaing" win pok-ko*)—e.g. Hla Baing (1976:sa,176-177) 'monks inside the *Sa-du" Bon-mi"ka" sect* (*Sa-du" Bon-mi"ka" tha-tha-na pyu" gaing" win than-ga-daw mya"*); 'wife inside the *ta-ya"* (*ta-ya" win za-ni"*), i.e. legal wife; son inside the *ta-ya"*, i.e. legal son; 'members of caste of *a-ri-ya" (a-ri-ya" zat win thu do" zin mya"*)' (see under *Than-ga-daw hni" myo"* in *Aw-ba-tha* (1975:568)).

WM PERIOD

The 'Wi'pat-tha-na Period' is also known as the 'Purity Period' (*wi'mak-ti*) or, as explicitly referred to by Ko Lei' (1980:565), a 'practice period' (*pa-di'pat-ti' hkit*). Also, the charity and scriptural learning periods are given in reversed order: charity first and then scriptural learning (Ko Lei' 1980:612). Among others quoting this 2x5 period cycle in the literature are Tin Myin' (1977:206) and Teik-hka-sa-ra' (1959:71-72).

See also: Five Periods, Enlightenment Period.

YAW[®]GI

Yaw"gi is today's standard Burmese term for 'meditator', or 'he who applies himself to the meditation objects' (*ka-ma-hian" a" htok thu*). Yet in the 1930s the term had a much wider meaning. *Ya-zein-da'* (1937:11-12)—who wrote a booklet on the term—complained that, while it had specific usages before, in his days (the 1930s) it was being used too liberally to refer to too wide a range of activities, including persons giving charity, those taking the precepts, those who preach, those who contribute labour to a religious cause, those who perform the water libation ceremony, those who attend ceremonies, etc. But since the 1930s the term *yaw"gi* has come to be used in the more confined sense of referring to a mainstream Buddhist meditator (i.e. WM in particular).

Today the term *yaw"gi* stands in clear contrast to the term *zaw-gyi* or *zaw-gi*, which is applied to mythical hermits (*ya-thei*) and aspirant 'worldly sages' (*law"ki weik-za*) who are dedicated to a large variety of meditational and other activities which are not necessarily mainstream Buddhist (they also need not be constrained by Buddhist morality, though they often claim they are). The wide range of activities pursued by the mythical *zaw-gi* are often somewhat loosely referred to as 'doing concentration' (*tha-ma-ha*), which, used in this sense, means the occult skills of the *weik-za-do*: alchemic stones (*dat-lon*), magic words (*man-dan*), cabalistic squares (*in*), etc. In sum: the *yaw"gi*, aiming for *neik-ban*, is concerned with 'purity' and transcending the cycle of rebirth completely, whereas the *zaw-gyi*, in aiming to improve and extend life (often with the declared aim of meeting the next Buddha in person), is concerned with 'power' (*da-go*). The terms 'otherworldly sage' (*law"kol-ta-ra weik-za*) and 'worldly sage' (*law"ki weik-za*) conveys much the same meaning. More about this distinction will be found in chapter 6.

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In Htun¹ Myin¹ (1968) it is thought that the *z* in *zaw-gyi* is due to the adoption of the Brahmin's pronunciation of the letter *y*: *yaw²gi-ni* becomes *zaw-ga-ni*. Ya-zein-da¹ (1937:7) held that this usage is derived from Sanskrit and that this term was used specifically for the pre-Buddhist Brahmin 'Hindu monks', 'outside Buddhism', who practised 'concentration' meditation (*tha-ma-hla*), whereas the usage of *yaw²gi* in the Pali scriptures refers to those who practice meditation in more strictly Buddhist fashion.

The Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw (BTNA 1979: 28) follows distinction made in *Wi¹thok-di mek* between two kinds of 'yogis': *samatha-yānika* who 'primarily develops access-absorption concentration' and the *vipassanā-yānika* who 'proceeds directly with insight without having previously developed the said concentration'.

Yaw²gi is derived from Pali *yogin*,¹⁵ meaning 'joining', and has two main meanings: 'to apply oneself to' or 'working by means of' (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921:5). More specifically, it means 'one who devoted himself to spiritual things, one who shows effort (in contemplation), a philosopher, wise man'. The term does not occur in the *Nikāyas*, but it is used elsewhere, including *Visudhimagga* (Pe Maung Tin 1921:52, 14, 66, 71, 150, 320, 373, 509, 620, 651, 696). In Pe Maung Tin's (1921:5:429) translation of *Visudhimagga*, *yaw²gi* is translated simply as 'ascetic'. Ya-zein-da¹ (1937) attributed two specific meanings to the term *yaw²gi*. The first is in reference to the three *yaw²ga¹* which tie one to the cycle of existence and which has to be broken, namely 'greed' (*law²ba¹*), 'hatred' (*daw²tha¹*), and 'ignorance' (*maw²ha¹*). The second meaning is in reference to the meditator; he concluded that 'morality' (*thi-la¹*) must be at the basis of the definition of *yaw²gi* relative to one's role (i.e. laity must in normal life keep the 5 precepts; nuns, and during sabbath laity, must keep the 8 precepts; novices must keep the 105; and monks must keep the 227 rules).

YA-HAN²DA

The 'enlightened' (*ya-han²da*) is free from all remaining fetters, including: craving for material existence and for immaterial existence, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance and defilements. (S)he will not be reborn again and will enter into parinibbana at the end of the lifespan. (Ma-ha-si 1980a:49).

YEIK-THA

'Pleasant shade' (*yeik-tha*) is the preferred term for 'meditation centre', particularly in the Ma-ha-si centres. But it is also frequently used in the Ba¹ Hkin hagiography for meditation centre (e.g. Ko Lei¹ 1980: 295, 410, 415, 419, 423, 432). The term is glossed in

Stewart & Dunn (1940:81) as 'shady place, shelter, dwelling; refuge, protection, sanctuary'. Evidently this expression is an ancient one, in its most general form applying to the protection afforded by anyone as in the expression *a-yeik hko thi*: 'to take shelter in a shade; also also used fig; in the sense of taking refuge in the power and influence of another.' (Judson 1953)

The term shadow is frequently applied to the protection afforded by the Buddha's teachings, as well as of kings authority: 'the Law, which may be called the Buddha's shelter [*a-yeik*], affords more peace than the protection [*a-yeik*] of the king...' (Stewart & Dunn)

The term shadow is used in referring to monasteries, as in Hnet-dwin¹ *Yeik-tha* (Mendelson 1975:109). We also see it used in this sense in the History of the Ma-ha Baw¹di¹ Centre (Ma-ha Baw¹di¹ 1979:1): 'These assembly halls (*da-ma yon*) invitingly call the *yaw²gi* to enter their cool shadow.'

Aw-ba-tha (1975:51) gives 'the five shades, in which one is not mistaken to seek refuge and comfort': i. the shadow of a tree; ii. the shadow of mother, father and family; iii. the shadow of good teachers; iv. the shadow of good kings; v. the holy *tha-tha-na* shadow of the Buddhas. The term for oasis is 'desert pleasant shade' (*gan-da-ya¹ yeik-tha*).

ZAT

Zat (P. *Jātaka*) stories are birth-stories of the former lives of the Buddha. Luce (1956:302) said that 'It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that they have formed the basis of half our (Burmese) art and literature.' Spiro (1970:21) noted that '... the Jataka alone are constantly appealed to as a court of last resort whenever a moral is to be drawn, a point to be made, a position to be defended', and gives a number of examples on how U¹ Nu¹ used these to justify his political actions. The close association of these story lines with the theatre means that the Burmese word for stage-play is also *zat*.

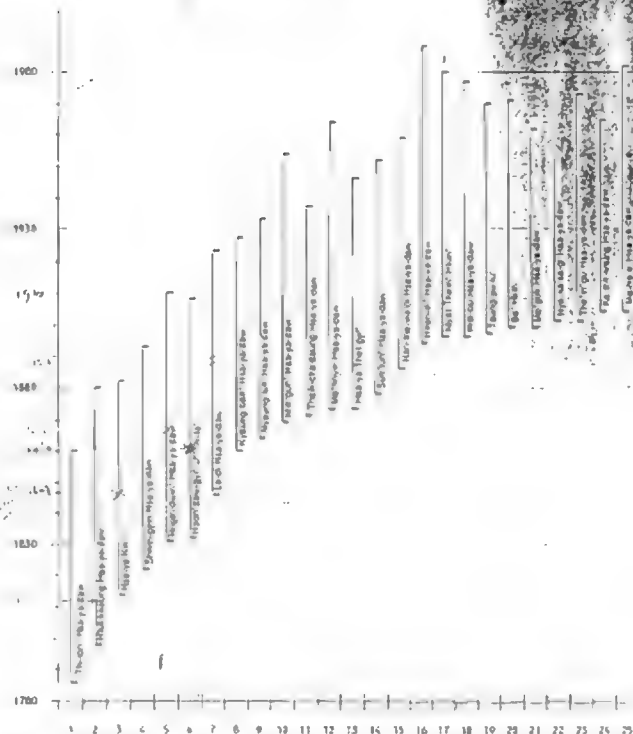
Though the birth-stories are referred to as 'the 530 birth stories', the Pali version only possesses 547. These are divided into 22 different constituents (*ni¹bat*), which contain between 1-150 *zat* each. Wei-than-da-ra *Zat* is the first of the 22nd constituent named *ma-ha ni¹bat*, which contains 10 birth stories. These 10 are particularly important in that they illustrate the Ten Perfections (*pa-ra-mi*). (See end-notes, *pa-ra-mi*).

Other literature on the *Zat* in Burma includes: Lu Pe Win. 1966 'The Jatakas in Burma.' (In *Essays offered to G. H. Luce*, Ba Shin, Jean Boisselier, and A. B. Griswold, eds. Ascona, Switzerland, Artibus Asiae). For the extensive translations of the jatakas from the Pali, see *Jataka Stories* (translated by various hands under E.B. Cowell's editorship. Pali Text Society, 1895-1907, 1913).

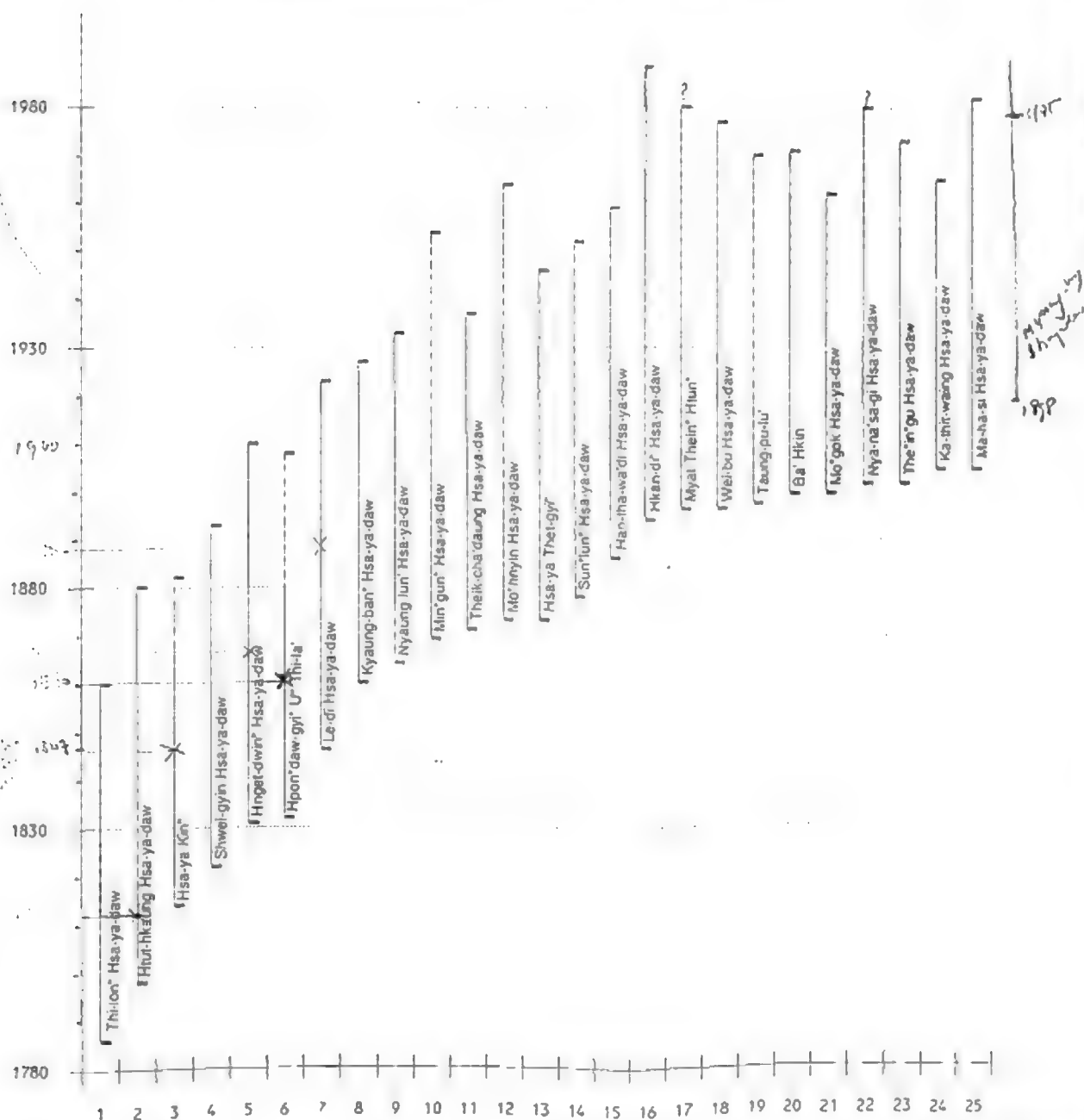
15 Derived from Pali *yoga*, variously meaning: 1 yoke, yoking; 2. connection with, application to, conjunction with; 3. bond, tie, attachment to what yokes to rebirth; 4. application, endeavour, undertaking, effort; 5. pondering over, concentration, devotion; (magic) power, influence, device, scheme; 7. means, instrument, remedy (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921:5:558).

Appendix A. Lifespans of Buddhist practice teachers

Birth	Death	Name
1706	1801	Tai ho' Hsi-pa-dao
1720	1803	Hsiang-shung Hsi-pa-dao
1814	1887	Hsiang-shu
1833	1892	Shao-yen Hsi-pa-dao
1841	1910	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1853	1926	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1866	1925	Le di Hsi-pa-dao
1886	1927	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1884	1925	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1889	1954	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1891	1927	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1893	1904	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1897	1944	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1898	1953	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1896	1925	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1898	1906	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1899	?	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1898	1877	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1897	1873	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1899	1871	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1899	1880	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1900	?	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1901	1873	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1904	1865	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao
1905	1882	Hsiang-shan Hsi-pa-dao



Appendix A. Lifespans of Buddhist practice teachers



Appendix B

Summary biographies of Buddhist practice teachers

Below are twenty-nine brief summaries of people famed for their meditation practice in the 19th and 20th centuries, together with some of the relevant sources (twenty-three monks, five laymen and one nun). It should be noted that:

- i) by no means all WM teachers are summarised below, and there will be others that need consideration—they were selected on the basis of their influence on meditation techniques taught in Burma today;
- ii) the sources given do not include the materials they have written for the simple reason that they have written too many works to mention. It merely indicates the sources where their respective biographical information can be found;
- iii) the exact dates have been converted from the Burmese calendar to our Gregorian calendar as far as possible using Pyin-nya A-lin" (1979) with the Burmese year from which it was converted given in brackets;
- iv) It should also be noted that the majority of the early generation of monks who developed their interest in WM did so by themselves out of personal preference and dedication only after having spent a considerable time in scriptural learning. Most left their home monastery after ordination to study at the various centres of learning in Mandalay or Pak-hkok-ku. Then they would have some responsibilities in teaching in some other monastery, often back in the village they came from. Only after this would they begin their meditation studies, write about it and teach it. Today many monks will have had WM as part of their early education in the monastery, and will not need to repeat this lonely quest for meditational knowledge in quite the same way;
- v) on naming of the monks see end-notes, 'titles: monks';
- vi) the age of monks is counted inclusive of the time in the womb, so that their age will differ from what we attribute to them by about 3 months.
- vii) the claims by monks themselves (e.g. Sun"lun" and Nyaung-lun') of having achieved the state of *ya han-da* (giving exact time and date) are exceptions to the rule that achievements should not be broadcast. Sometimes, of course, it is the biographer who infers, but in the case of these two it was the monks themselves who lay claim to these achievements.

Ba' Hkin, U"

(1899-1971)

For an account of his life see chapter 7 in this thesis.

Burmese

Ko Lei", U" (1980) (summarised in chapter 7).

Htei" Hlaing (1978: 314-429 about his life; 299-301 about his meditation centre)

English

Chit Tin (1982)

[Ba' Hkin] (1977)

King (1957: 366; 1980: 98, 110, 111, 113, 125, 144; meditation method 121, 125 ff; quoted 99, 110, 111, 126-132, 69, 157 n11. See also Goenka, U p. 125.)

Kornfield (1977: 28, 235-256)

Mendelson (1975: 266n)

Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw**Gan-da-ma, U"**

(1886-1959)

His only biography is scant on details about his life (e.g. we are not told about his monk name), but below is a brief digest of the first 14 pages.

The Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw was born in Sin-bun'gon" Village (straddling the Townships of Hlin-tha-ta' and Lei'myet-hna in the contemporary Irrawaddy District) on 8 Feb 1886 (BurE 1247), at the dark hour for Burmese Buddhism and Burmese language and culture, when the last king of Burma and supporter of the Buddhist *tha-tha-na* had disappeared. In 1890 (1252) he was ordained a novice under (Sin-bun'gon" Village Hsa-ya-daw U") A-sa-ra'. In 1906 (1268) he was ordained a fully fledged monk under the same, where he remained two rainy seasons.

He left to study with Dan-mi'ka-ya-ma' Hsa-ya-daw in Myan-aung-myo', with Kan'thon-zin' Hsa-ya-daw from Kyan-gin'myo', and from there to the Kyaung'daw-ya Shwei-gyin" Monastery in Rangoon. He then moved to Mandalay to study with (Sa-ku'daik U") Hkei-mein-da' Hsa-ya-daw, (Hkin-ma'gan-daik U") Yei-wa-da' Hsa-ya-daw, U" Thi-la-sa-ra' Hsa-ya-daw, and U" Za-ga-ra' Hsa-ya-daw, and finally with the Nan-di'ya' Hsa-ya-daw, famed for his knowledge of the Abhidhamma, and Hsin-de' Hsa-ya-daw.

He returned from Mandalay in 1914 (1276), complete in scriptural learning, to his original Preceptor, where he became the head of a monastery where he taught WM. Between 1935 (1297) and 1948 (1310) he taught 20,000 pupils.

In 1948 (1310) he was invited to Rangoon for the meeting by the Buddhism and Practice Association (BPA) (Bok-da'tha-tha-na Pa-di'pat-ti' Tha-tha-na A-hpwe') which had been founded in 1945 (1307). After this he taught WM with Tha-ya-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw U" Nyei-ya' at Aung-gyin" Pi'ta-ka'daik, and became the Chief meditation teacher of the BPA, teaching three times daily at the Han-tha-wa-di School of Meditation (Han-tha-wa-di Ka-ma-han'daik) in Rangoon. His method was to give 3 days of concentration meditation (*tha-ma-hia*) and having them cross over to WM after that. People came from all over the country, and between 1948 (1310) and 1960 (1321) he taught at total of 16,339 pupils, including 2449 monk pupils. No less than 77 branches had been opened which took in 40,000 pupils, so that his total number of students exceeded 76,339. He is claimed to have published 10 books, but 6 appear to be reprints, leaving only 4 titles.

Like many other WM teaching monks, he did not

like to accept 'private' (*pok-ga-li'ka*) donations, but only dedicated to the monastic order.

A pagoda was built in memory of the Hsa-ya-daw in his village of birth.

He lived to the age of 74 and died 10 September 1959. At his funeral the Ex-President Sat Shwei Thaik¹ led the procession to lay his remains to rest.

The above information was abstracted from [Han-tha-wa-di Hsa-ya-daw] (n.a.), but Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 366-67) has some quite different information about this monk. Not only is his birth year different (given as 1887), but we finally learn his monk name is U" Gan-da-ma and that he was a meditation pupil of Hsa-ya Thet-gyi". Given that the latter was unordained, I am not entirely surprised that this was not acknowledged in his official biography. The Han-tha-wa-di Meditation Monastery in Rangoon was first built by Hsa-ya Thet-gyi".² It is noted that this Hsa-ya-daw gave up alchemism in favour of meditation. His teaching consisted of the standard Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" method, namely developing concentration (*tha-ma-hia*) for the first three days, followed by four days of WM.

Burmese

[Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw] n.a.

Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 366-67)

Htei" Hlaing (1978: 132-3)

English

Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw (1956)

Address

Bok-da'tha-tha-na' Pa-di'pat-ti'tha-tha-na-pyu'

A-hpwe'gyok-gyi" (Society for the Propagation of Buddhist Practice). Founded in 1945. Address:

Bhavana Street, Han-tha-wa'di Quarter, Rangoon.

This organisation was claimed in 1956 to have had six other meditation centres under its umbrella, and the addresses were published in

Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw (1956).

Hkan-di" Hsa-ya-daw**Thu'za-na', Hsa-ya-daw Ba'dan-la'**

(1894-1986)

Born on 21 September 1894 (BurE 1256) in Ga-zun-daung' Village in Ma'gwei" (Yaw'hti"lin" Town District) as one of 9 children, including three sisters. Because his parents were doing well after his birth they named him 'Maung Pleasant Progress' (Maung Tha To").

At the age of 10 he studied under U" Nyei-ya' from the monastery Kon'kyaung", located west of his village of birth. He was also taught by his father. In 1905 (1267), at the age of 12, he was ordained a novice for the first time with Gain'dauk Hsa-ya-daw U" Gan-da-ma from a monastery east of Ga-zun-daung' Village, and for a second time at the age of 17 with the same.

At the age of 17 he moved to study the scriptures with A-shin Pyin-nya and Wun'tho-hpon'gyi" A-shin San-di'ma at Ma-ha-wi'thu'da-ra-ma' Monastery in Pa-hkok-ku-myo'. At the age of 18 he followed A-shin San-di'ma to Hkan-di" Monastery in Wun'tho-myo'.

On 6 December 1913 (1275) he was ordained a monk at Hkan-da' Thein-daw-gyi" under the First Yei-wun'kyaung'daik Hsa-ya-daw-gyi" U" Za-yan-da', from whom he received the name Shin Thu'za-na'. He studied under (Hsa-ya-daw U") Nyei-ya' in the Ga-zun'daung Village, under Kin'ban'kyaung'gaing'dauk Hsa-ya-daw A-hpo" U" Gan-da-ma, under Pa-hkok-ku-myo'

¹ President Sat Shwei Thaik is also claimed to have been a pupil of this Hsa-ya-daw's meditation method (Han-tha-wa-di 1956: vi).

² This is confirmed in Tun Hla Aung (1956: 5).

Ma-ha-wi'thu'da-ra-ma' Ye-sa-gyo Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya-gyi" and Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-di-ta' A-shin Pyin-nya, and under many other teachers in Mandalay.

He was gradually promoted by U" San-di'ma, and when his preceptor died on 20 May 1932 (1294), he had to devote himself to scriptural learning until 1952 (1314).

In 1953 (1315) he left Hkan-di" Monastery to his pupils and moved to the Hkan-di" Yeik-tha dedicated to him by Government southwest of Wun"tho Myo', where he meditated. During the war he had also studied and meditated near Kyein-chaung Village in a forest hut for three years.

In 1952 (1316) he had become Chief Monk of Pa-hkok-ku Wi'thu'da-ra Ni'ka-ya'. He had also become Chief Monk of the monks from Wun-tho' District; was involved in the Sixth Sangayana; travelled abroad in 1957 to India, Nepal and Sri Lanka; was a member of the Committee in charge of cleaning purifying the Hmaw-bi Sects (1964); he also fulfilled an important function in the council for purification of Buddhism in 1979. In 1962 he received the Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-di'ta' title, and in 1980 the title A-bi'da-za' Ma-ha-ra-ha-gu'ru'.

The Hkan-di monastery has two Chief Monks and 5 teaching monks, with 180 monks in study. The Hkan-di" meditation centre has 30 permanent yaw"gi, 45 nun yaw"gi, and 50 other 'human' yaw"gi (lu yaw"gi) in meditation.

Burmese

Disciples from the Societies of Yaw" District in Mandalay and Ka'tha Township (1979).

Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw

Pan-da-wa', U³

(1831-1910)

Also known as:

Shwei-min" wun Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw, Ma-ha-tha-di' pat-han gaing"gyi" Hsa-ya-daw, Sa-du'bon-mi'ka' Hsa-ya-daw

Born on the 7th of the First waxing day of the Wa-zo month in 1831 (1193) in Shwei-bo, he was given the name Maung Mya' Thi". He studied from the age of 6 under (A-shin) Kan-da'nya from Sa-yit Monastery in Shwei-bo, where he novitiated at the age of 13. In 1852, at the age of 20, he ordained in the Hkan-da' Thein in the same monastery with the same monk as Preceptor.

He went to study with the Thin-ga-za Hsa-ya-daw U" Ek-ga'da-ma' in Mandalay. He was offered alms by King Min'don" and received the title of Fyin-nya-di-pa' Ka-wi'deik-tha Paun-mok-hka' Ti'pi'ta-ka-lin-ka-ra'.

At the age of 36, after 16 rainy seasons as a monk, he went to Min" wun Hill⁴ west of Mandalay, where he devoted himself to the duty of WM (wi'pat-tha-na du-ra'). This hill had many caves in which Ba-zin" hto" birds lived. His cave resembled one, and so 'The beginning of tha-di' pat-han, is in the bird cave (hnget-dwin)". He became known as Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw. After 15 years in these caves he moved to Sa-gaing" hill. In 1886 (1248) he visited to Lower Burma together with King Thi"baw where they stayed at Kun'gyan-gon"myo'le-paw monastery, the chief monk of which was a pupil of the Thin-ga-za Hsa-ya-daw. In 1887 (1249) he became chief monk of the Le-paw Sect (?). He taught Ma-ha-tha-di' pat-han exercises successfully in Thahton (Hla' Baing 1976: 84). He died on 13 October 1910 in Tha-hton. He wrote

approx. 20 works (Hla' Baing 1976: 86).

The Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw was put in the same league as the Le-di & Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daws:

Such monks as Shwei-gyin, Le-di, and Hnget-dwin" were famous monks who pioneered to establish and advance the tradition of practice (pa-di'pat-ti'tha-tha-na). Sa-du'bu'mi-ka' ma-ha-tha-di' pat-han exercises were contemporary with the first Min-gun Zel-da-wun Hsa-ya-daw. According to the said 'The beginning of wi'pat-tha-na is a lake', after the first Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw's (lake) wi'pat-tha-na work named gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' ma-ha-nei-bu-ta' appeared, in the latter part of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw period there was a flood of wi'pat-tha-na works that fit up the tradition of practice. (Hla' Baing 1976: 63).

He was tutor of the Chief Queen of King Min'don", and founder of the Hnget-dwin Sect, also known as the Shwei-min" wun Tha-di' pat-han Sect, and later also known as Sa-du'bon-mi'ka' Sect (meaning the four foundations of Tha-di' pat-han) and Ma-ha-tha-di' pat-han Sect (on various names of sects see Hla' Baing (1976: 74, 78). Also, it was known as A-zl-wa'htan-ma-ka' Sect, after the moral precepts his pupils used to follow to achieve successful practice of tha-di' pat-han. The history of the sect formation is described in detail in Hla' Baing (1976: 63) and in condensed form in Maung Maung (1981). The sect was accepted as legitimate member of the nine approved sects by the Sangha Council of 1980.

Htin Aung (1966: 20-25) interpreted his teachings as having posed a challenge to the Thu'da-ma Council set up by King Min'don".

As a leader of a forest monk sect in Sagaing, he had to leave Upper Burma because of disputes with the King and the Council and established himself in Lower Burma in 1885, where his sect became known as such. It noted: 1) that pagoda offerings encouraged rats; 2) laity have no need to take the 5 precepts in front of monks because, if not observed, this person cannot be a Buddhist; 3) monks should not be ordained unless trained in meditation; 4) gifts should be given to the Sangha as a whole and not as private property to a single monk; 5) no monk should reside anywhere for longer than 2 years. An emphasis is discernible on a stricter scheme of 12 precepts.

See also Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw

Burmese

Hla' Baing (1976: 63). The life of Hnget-dwin"

Hsa-ya-daw is described in Part One, pp. 3-66.

The Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw has no entry in either Wi'thu'di' (1976) or Htei" Hlaing" (1981a). This is surprising since this monk was particularly prominent and these two authors have gone out of their way to include as much material as possible; one can only assume that he was excluded because of a dislike for his methodology?

English

Htin Aung (1966: 20-25)

Mendelson (1975: 107-109, 364; Hngetwin Sect 86, 91, 92, 165, 169, 170-71, 231, 288, 289, 292, 364)

Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw

Nya-na'wun-tha, Shin

(1798-1880)

The Shwei-hin-tha Hsa-ya-daw prefaces the biography about the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw saying that many foreign Buddhists are apt to want to know about the personalities who achieved success in WM in Burma.

3 Hla' Baing (1976: 65-6) gave the birth date of the Hnget-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw as 1852 (1214) and his date of death as 1937 (1299), which does not appear to have been accepted by Maung Maung (1981). I assume Maung Maung had access to more material and was better researched for the occasion, so I have accepted his dates.

4 The Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw also got his name from Min" wun Hill.

This is an important reason for recounting the story of this monk's life.

The Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw was born in 1798 (1160) in Myin-ga-gon¹ Village near the town Lei²myet-hna. His parents, U³ Lu Gyi⁴ and Daw Mei, had one other child, a daughter Ma⁵ Ngwei.

After meeting the visiting A-shin Nya-na⁶, abbot from Man-gyi⁷ forest monastery, he went to this monk's monastery at age 13 in 1811 (1173), and soon became a novice under the name Shin Nya-na⁸ wun-da⁹, by which time his father had died. Shin Nya-na⁸ went with the Hsa-ya-daw to Ava¹⁰. Here he studied, and with his teacher's praise and his moral perfection, he came to be patronised by the principal queen who was Thi-ri¹¹pa-wa¹²ra¹³ti¹⁴ Law¹⁵ka¹⁶ma¹⁷ha¹⁸ya¹⁹zein²⁰da²¹Ya²²da²³na²⁴Dei²⁵wi²⁶.

He was ordained a monk in 1819 (1181) under the same monk in the same monastery sponsored by the same Queen. In 1827 (1188) he went west of Sa-gaing²⁷ Hill, near the Ya²⁸da²⁹na³⁰ Htut-hkaung pagoda at Min³¹wun³²Hill³³. This is how he came to be referred to as the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw. He kept the 13 du³⁴din³⁵. He meditated in the forest like this without a roof over his head between 7 and 27 rainy seasons as monk until 1846 (1208). When Min³⁶don³⁷ accessed the throne in 1853, Min³⁸don³⁹ and his brother built the Hsa-ya-daw a monastery at Hsan⁴⁰ma⁴¹chaung⁴². He received the title 'Teacher of the King' (Ya⁴³za⁴⁴gu⁴⁵ru⁴⁶), but he did not value this title and returned to Sa-gaing⁴⁷ Hill. Though many visited him and he taught meditation methods to over 300 pupils, he always avoided overcrowding. He is renowned for his rhymes on meditation (ka⁴⁸ma⁴⁹hlan⁵⁰ than⁵¹bauk⁵²).

The Mother Queen of Thi-baw⁵³ became a nun in his monastery. Many nuns would cook and take care of his monastery, but he also taught at least one unordained man.

The Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw was subject to the cynical comments by the Ban⁵⁴maw⁵⁵ Hsa-ya-daw who wrote poems about him such as,

He has a rosary (his hands move around it). The Htut-hkaung stays in the forest. His forest has many pretty (chaw⁵⁶ye⁵⁷) virtues (thi⁵⁸la⁵⁹).

This poem 'implies that the forest monk plays not with his rosary but with pretty Sagaing nuns'. Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw was one of the teachers of the nun Me Kin⁶⁰, which meant that the Ban⁶¹maw⁶² Hsa-ya-daw insulted her too (Ferguson 1975: 225).

The story also goes that one time the Ban⁶³maw⁶⁴ Hsa-ya-daw was roasting an iguana near to the path where the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw usually went on his daily alms-round. Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw remarked that it was not proper for a monk to roast an iguana in the open like this, what would people think of this. The Ban⁶⁵maw⁶⁶ Hsa-ya-daw replied referring to Htut-hkaung's association with nuns, 'That may be true, for those who like iguanas it will be iguanas, but for those who like nuns, it will be nuns of course'.

Burmese

Shwei-hin-tha Hsa-ya-daw (1978)

Tha-tha-na⁶⁷ Wi⁶⁸thok⁶⁹di⁷⁰ (1977: 152-169)

Htei⁷¹ Hlaing (1981: 156-178)

Tin Myin⁷² (1977: 124-135) 120-135

Hla⁷³ Tha-mein (1961: 85-86)

English

Ferguson (1975: 193, 225)

Ka-thit-waing Hsa-ya-daw

Rei⁷⁴wa⁷⁵ta⁷⁶, U⁷⁷

(1904-1965)

Born as one of 10 children named Maung Shwei Ba⁷⁸ on

24 Feb 1904 (1265) from peasants U⁷⁹ Bo⁸⁰ Kan and Daw Sein⁸¹ Yin in A-bya⁸² A-le⁸³su⁸⁴ Village (near Wo⁸⁵ Myo⁸⁶ in Pegu Hka-yaing). At the age of 8 he went to study with U⁸⁷ Ka-ly⁸⁸na⁸⁹, the abbot of A-bya⁹⁰ A-htet⁹¹su⁹² monastery, under whom he novitiated at age 12. At the age of 14 he went to study with U⁹³ Kaw⁹⁴tha⁹⁵la⁹⁶ and U⁹⁷ Ein⁹⁸da⁹⁹wun¹⁰⁰tha¹⁰¹ at the In¹⁰²wa¹⁰³taung and the Tha¹⁰⁴yet¹⁰⁵taw¹⁰⁶ monastery in Rangoon. At age 16 he passed his pa¹⁰⁷hta¹⁰⁸ma¹⁰⁹byan¹¹⁰ exam. At age 20 he ordained under Kyaik¹¹¹hto¹¹²ma¹¹³yan¹¹⁴cho¹¹⁵ Hsa-ya-daw. He studied three years in Pak¹¹⁶hk¹¹⁷ku¹¹⁸ Ma¹¹⁹ha¹²⁰wi¹²¹thu¹²²da¹²³ monastery under Hsa-ya-daw U¹²⁴ Pyin¹²⁵nya¹²⁶, U¹²⁷ Nan¹²⁸da¹²⁹, U¹³⁰ Thon¹³¹da¹³²ra¹³³, and in Rangoon with Hpa¹³⁴ya¹³⁵daik¹³⁶gyi¹³⁷ Hsa-ya-daw U¹³⁸ Kon¹³⁹da¹⁴⁰nya¹⁴¹, where he passed his pa¹⁴²hta¹⁴³ma¹⁴⁴lat¹⁴⁵dan¹⁴⁶. He furthermore studied briefly with: Mandalay Shwei¹⁴⁷yei¹⁴⁸zaung¹⁴⁹ Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁵⁰ Kyi¹⁵¹ and U¹⁵² Pan¹⁵³da¹⁵⁴wa¹⁵⁵, Bon¹⁵⁶gyaw¹⁵⁷daik¹⁵⁸ Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁵⁹ Kaw¹⁶⁰thi¹⁶¹ta¹⁶², Hpa¹⁶³ya¹⁶⁴gyi¹⁶⁵daik¹⁶⁶ Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁶⁷ Na¹⁶⁸ra¹⁶⁹da¹⁷⁰ and Han¹⁷¹tha¹⁷²wa¹⁷³di¹⁷⁴ Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁷⁵ Ein¹⁷⁶da¹⁷⁷tha¹⁷⁸ba¹⁷⁹.

After six rainy seasons he got his pa¹⁸⁰hta¹⁸¹ma¹⁸²gyi¹⁸³dan¹⁸⁴, and he then spent 3 rainy seasons at Kyon¹⁸⁵tu¹⁸⁶ monastery in Wo¹⁸⁷myo¹⁸⁸. After 12 rainy seasons as a monk he returned to his original preceptor U¹⁸⁹ Ka-ly¹⁹⁰na¹⁹¹ at A-bya¹⁹² A-htet¹⁹³su¹⁹⁴ monastery where he studied for 22 rainy seasons.

WWII destroyed the monastery, and when his preceptor died, he went to meditate at Hpet¹⁹⁵ka¹⁹⁶leik¹⁹⁷ monastery for one rainy season, after which he returned to his native village to teach his relatives. Because Ka-thit-waing Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁹⁸ Kon¹⁹⁹da²⁰⁰la²⁰¹ had already died, he remained in this monastery to teach meditation for 19 years, and became known as the Ka-thit-waing Hsa-ya-daw. After the Mo²⁰²gok²⁰³ Hsa-ya-daw died, whose WM method was so popular at the time, the Ka-thit-waing's method was still growing in popularity.

He died on 17 February 1965 (1327) at the age of 62, having spent 42 rainy seasons in the monastic order. He was succeeded by A-shin Wi²⁰⁴sei²⁰⁵ta²⁰⁶tha²⁰⁷ (for his other pupils see Tei²⁰⁸zaw²⁰⁹tha²¹⁰ta²¹¹ra²¹² 1967: 105).

Burmese

Tei²¹³zaw²¹⁴tha²¹⁵ra²¹⁶ (1967)

Tha²¹⁷tha²¹⁸na²¹⁹ Wi²²⁰thok²²¹di²²² (1977: 407-409).

Htei²²³ Hlaing (1981: 656-661)

Kin²²⁴, Hsa-ya

Me Hkei²²⁵ma²²⁶ Thi²²⁷la²²⁸shin

(1814-1882)

Born in Ma²²⁹ni²³⁰pu²³¹ra²³² in 1814 (1176), she came to Burma at the age of six (some records have it as three years old) to become the most famous nun in Burmese history.

We do not know at what age she became a nun, but it was at a young age soon after she arrived in Ava. After studying with a nun for a while (name unknown) she went to study with an ex-monk on Sagaing Hill. In the evenings she studied with the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw. She then studied with her brother Shan²³³ga²³⁴lei²³⁵kyun²³⁶ Hsa-ya-daw. Her name Hkei²³⁷ma²³⁸ means 'free from danger' in Pali. Her companion Hsa-ya Me Nat²³⁹Pei²⁴⁰ (Dei²⁴¹wa²⁴²dei²⁴³na²⁴⁴) lived in Min²⁴⁵gun²⁴⁶ and was 10 years older. If Me Kin²⁴⁷ specialised in scriptural learning and taught this to Me Nat²⁴⁸Pei²⁴⁹, Me Nat²⁵⁰Pei²⁵¹ specialised in meditation, which she taught to Me Kin²⁵².

While they were practicing WM in 1847, Pagan Min²⁵³ (reign 1846-53) arrived by boat with his family. Prince Min²⁵⁴don²⁵⁵ and Prince Ka²⁵⁶naung²⁵⁷ impressed with the nuns and invited them to the palace. They began to teach royalty, and in 1859 they were invited to teach the queens and daughters of the royal family. She stayed East of the Mandalay Hill (East of

5 The Hngat-dwin²⁵⁸ Hsa-ya-daw received his name from his association with this hill.

Shwei-gyin-nga^u daik Monastery) and inside the Palace in Myauk-u^u yin-taw"ya^u Monastery. She taught scriptures, preached and taught *wi^u pat-tha-na* meditation (Ya^u wei-htun^u 1965: 171). The phenomenon of 'nun temporary ordination' (*thi-la^u shin pyu^u de*) appeared, in which princesses as well as ordinary women, became nuns for a brief period of time under Hsa-ya Kin^u. In this way the mother of Thi-baw^u, the last king of Burma, had been a nun. King Min^u"don" is thought to have listened to the sermons of Me Kin^u as a prince, to have invited her to Mandalay to 'teach his queens religion as well as manners' and to have been 'most appreciative and, as a mark of veneration for Saya Kin^u... had his younger daughters cut off their hair with great pomp and ceremony in order to become temporary Thilashins under her tutelage' (Mi Mi Khaing 1984: 79-86). As Hsa-ya Kin^u grew older, she renounced scriptural learning and devoted herself entirely to meditation, and she delegated teaching to her senior pupils. She eventually moved to meditate east of Min^u wun Hill with Hsa-ya Kywe, the sister of Prince Kyauk-lon^u. She died on 13 December 1882 (1244) in her cave in Sagaing while practicing WM at age 68. King Thi-baw^u was very sad and dedicated a small spire for her in front of her cave. Ferguson (1975: 223) looked at the link between Hsa-ya Kin^u and the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw (see below), who was very much in demand with King Min^u"don". This association meant that Me Kin^u was becoming embroiled in the sectarian pressures building up in the Burmese monastic order during the reign in Min^u"don". The Ban^u maw^u Hsa-ya-daw made fun of the association between Me Kin^u and the Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw as follows:

'One day Me Kin^u called her small scholars (*thi-la^u yin*) and she chose some nice and well-formed papayas and sent them with two novice nuns to the Ban^u maw^u Monastery... to be offered to the Ban^u maw^u Hsa-ya-daw. At that time, the Ban^u maw^u Hsa-ya-daw asked the young nuns, "What kind of special message is given to me?" One small novice answered, "Our teacher, Me Kin^u, said, "This papaya offering is given because I want to become like the Lord Buddha." At that time the Hsa-ya-daw said, "All right. You had better go. Your teacher should not ask to become a Lord Buddha. Please tell her that the first thing that must happen is that my organ must move over to her place. She had better pray that this thing that hangs between my thighs will hang between her thighs. She must pray for this first." So he gave that message, and the little scholars took it back. Me Kin^u became furious and said, "This monk disgraces me. I shall have to return a message to him to expose him." [Ferguson quoting Thein (1958: 390-392), Burmese words/names converted to the transcription method of this thesis]

She then wrote an insulting poem in reply that Ban^u maw^u was being over-sexed, to which the reply by Ban^u maw^u was that she was a 'garrulous harlot'. King Min^u"don" got involved, and the Ban^u maw^u was banished. See also Htut-hkaung.

Burmese

Ya^u wei-htun^u (1965: 153-85)

English

See Mi Mi Khaing (1984: 79-86)
Ferguson (1975: 223, 226)

Kin^u"taw"ya^u Hsa-ya-daw (U^u Hkei-ma)

See Min^u gun^u Hsa-ya-daw 'practice tradition lineage'.

He was the teacher of Thi-lon^u Hsa-ya-daw (U^u San-di^u ma), who was the teacher of A-le-taw"ya^u (U^u Myit-zu-tha), who was the teacher of the Min^u gun^u Hsa-ya-daw.

See Htei^u Hlaing (1981a: 144-155) on the association between the Thi^u lon^u Hsa-ya-daw and Kin^u"taw"ya^u Hsa-ya-daw.

Kyaung-ban^u Hsa-ya-daw

Ein-da-ka^u, U^u

(1860-1927)

Born at Kyi^u bin-chaung^u Village (19 miles from Mon-ywa in Thu^u tha-lin Town District) in 1860 (3rd of the waxing moon of Tha^u din^u gyut 1222) from hill farmers U^u Mya^u and Daw Hlaing. His name was Maung Than Tu. At the age of 6 he studied with Ywa-u^u Kyaung^u Hsa-ya-daw U^u Mu^u nein-da^u, and he novitiated at the age of 14. After 3 years he had to leave monkhood because his teacher had died. After some years, when his father died, he wanted to become a novice again, but did not receive permission from his mother. So he went to Sa-gaing^u Hill to Nyaung-bin-chaung where Shin Nya-na^u (later to become the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw) was. He ordained as a novice under the Nya-na^u who took him to Mandalay San-kyaung^u Monastery. In 1880 (1242) he ordained under the Thit-hsein^u Hsa-ya-daw at the Sa-gaing^u daw Nyaung-bin-tha-chaung. In 1882 (1244), when Nya-na^u returned he went to study with the Hsi^u ban^u ni Hsa-ya-daw.

In 1891 (1253) when the Le-di-daik Monastery at Mon-ywa was finished he was invited by the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, where he became an assistant teacher. He requested that, as he still mourned the death of his teacher and of his father, he wished to concentrate on meditation instead of teaching. With the encouragement of Le-di, he went to the Wet-ye^u "taw" Forest, thirty miles from Mon-ywa, where he remained for 4 years. He fell ill and called for Le-di to come and see him.

In 1903 (1265) he moved to Kyaung-ban^u "taw" Forest, east of Ku-taw^u ywa-mun, where the laity came to meditate, and he became known as the Kyaung-ban^u "taw"ya^u Hsa-ya-daw. From 1916 (1278) onwards he became famous and had many monk and lay pupils. He wrote six works on WM.

He died on 5 January 1927. His works were carved in stone and a shrine was dedicated to him (*a-yo^u o^u zai-di*).

From Hla^u Baing (1967: 281) we learn that Kyaung-ban^u Hsa-ya-daw belonged to the Le-di faction (*Le-di Ni^u ke-gaing^u*).

Kyaung-ban^u Hsa-ya-daw is implicated in the historical succession of teachers of practice according to the saying,

When the lake (in^u) was walled, a field (le) appeared
Upon the emerged field, the bird (hngat) descended
When the bird had descended, the cat (kyaung) pounced

The lake (in^u) was in reference to the Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw's work Gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra^u Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta^u, the emerged field referred to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, the bird referred to the Hngat-dwin^u Hsa-ya-daw, and the cat to the Kyaung-ban^u Hsa-ya-daw.

Burmese

Tha-tha-na^u Wi^u thok-di^u (1977: 249-254).

Htei^u Hlaing (1981: 378-386).

Hla^u Baing (1967: 281-296)

Le-di Hsa-ya-daw

Nya-na^u, U^u

(1846-1923)

In 1846 Le-di Hsa-ya-daw was born in Sain-pyin village, near Di-pe^u yin^u Township District. His lay name was Maung Tet Hkaung. His early life progressed from attendance at Myin-tin-daik Monastery in his native village at the age of 10, to ordination as a novice at the same monastery at the age of 15 (whence he received his monastic name (Shin) Nya-na^u da-za^u), to finally ordination as fully fledged monk at the age of 20, also at the same monastery.

By the age of 23 he had learnt so much from the scriptures (but also astrology and poetry), that he had exhausted all there was to learn in the village

monastery, and so he left his native village, as ambitious village monks were apt to do, for the Golden City of Mandalay (Shwei-myo'daw).

By 1869 he found himself a teacher in (Shin) Thok-da'tha-na' (1815-88), the Second Hsa-ya-daw of the Min-ga-la-sa Monastery, located just north of Mandalay. This monk was very learned, enjoyed great prestige, and had been bestowed many favours by Burmese royalty, including King Tha-ra-wa-di, and King Min'don' and his Queens. This monk also occupied a leading position among the eight member-strong Thu'da-ma' Council, appointed by King Min'don' on 26 June 1860 in title of a single Head of the Order (Tha-tha-na-baing), which served until the reappointment of a head of the Order in the Taung-daw Hsa-ya-daw in 1866 (who was head until 1880).⁶

The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's arrival at the San-kyauing' monastery in 1869 therefore heralded his incorporation into the lineage of one of the most influential monastic factions in Upper Burma (see Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 200)). It was an exciting period. King Min'don' had started his campaign to purify Buddhism in 1856, when the Royal Order on the Purification of the Religion (*Da-ma' wi'ni'*) had been passed. By 4 May 1868, the year before the Le-di's arrival in Mandalay⁷, the copying of the *Pi'ta-ka'* onto 729 stones was finished. But a most important event was still to take place after the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw joined the royal capital: the Fifth Synod organized by King Min'don' (reign: 1853-1878) was still to take place two years afterwards in Mandalay between 15 April-12 September 1871. As the Fourth Buddhist Synod recognized by the Burmese had taken place in Sri Lanka almost 2,000 years previously between 29-13 BC, this was a major historical event.⁸ Though still young with only 5 rainy seasons as a fully fledged monk, the Le-di contributed to this event by completing research for the San Kyaung' Hsa-ya-daw, who used this material to contribute to the Fifth Synod on the *A-bi'da-ma'*. All the prospects pointed towards the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw one day too, like his teacher, being honoured for his teaching by the Burmese Court. Such recognition would allow him a platform to preach to the subjects of the Burmese monarch.

Yet not long after the Synod, foreigners threatened to take over the country; the English had already annexed Lower Burma during the first two Anglo-Burmese Wars since 1824, halving the area of suzerainty of the Burmese monarchy. The English were threatening to annex Upper Burma too, including the royal capital where the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw found himself. The Le-di biography described how this monk faced the dangers of the foreigner's impending destruction of Buddhism:

1376 In the year 1883, the foreigners had already captured King Thi-baw'. When the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw learnt that Burma was likely to be governed by foreigners, the following occurred to this Noble Great monk. 'If foreigners are to rule Burma, it will cause many terrestrial animals to be killed and destroyed. The reason is that western foreigners are the type of people who have ap-

petite for enormous quantities of meat. If they arrive in Burma, they will set up killing factories of cows, of pigs, of goats, where so many such creatures will meet their death.' After musing thus, he spoke the following to the monks:

'Monks, the foreigners are about to rule Burma now. When they rule, many creatures are likely to die. Among these creatures, it is the cow that is the saviour of man's life. This animal is both our mother as well as our father, and mankind is much in debt with them. Therefore, from this day onwards, I shall not eat cow's meat, and please I implore you not to eat it either.'

From the day he had spoken like this, he eliminated cow meat from his diet. (Hla' Tha-mein 1961: 28)

Soon after the foreigners had taken over Upper Burma, the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw prepared himself for the 'destruction of the era' (*ka-la' pyet thi*); on 15 February 1887 he 'retreated into the frightening Le-di Forest of which many alleged that there were malignant ghosts, that it was rough and a spooky forest'. He found a big tree, and resolved, 'That tree is an excellent place, and he meditated under it'. Through the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's presence, the forest became a friendly forest. (Hla' Tha-mein 1961: 29).

And so it was with the gradual contraction of the 'monarchical' universe at the beginning of the 19th century, yet with the expansion of the 'foreign' universe through the encroachment of the British, that the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw took to the forest in meditation; this was to eventually inspire Burmese Buddhists to take more than a passing interest in meditation. He contributed to the vernacularization of Buddhism by writing and preaching mostly in simple Burmese language (not Pali) about meditation to the Burmese, and he touched and inspired the imagination of the Buddhist masses.¹⁰

In 1911 he received the *Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-di'ta'* title.

Times were changing in the west, where interest in Buddhism had been awakened. Childers had published his Pali Dictionary in 1875, the Pali Text Society had been founded on 1881 and the UK Buddhist Society in 1883. Increasingly westerners were looking towards Burma for answers to their questions on Buddhism. On 4 October 1913¹¹ after briefly staying at the YMBA Office and attending its 18 June 1913 meeting, he founded the Naing-ngan-gya' Bok-da'ba-tha tha-tha-na-pyu' A-thin'gyi' in Mandalay, one of the earliest Buddhist missionary organisations aimed at making Buddhism known abroad with the foreigner.

In 1914 he wrote *Wi'pat-tha-na mek-ga' di-pa-ni*, 'for the benefit of European Buddhists' (Wun-ni'ta' 1956: 175), which stands as an early record of the role of WM in a Buddhism increasingly selfconscious of the encroachment of the foreigner. Of particular interest is also the relationship between wilderness and meditation.

The details of his life are included in chapter 1. A prolific writer, authoring no less than 68 books and pamphlets. Considered one of the leading exponents of the Insight meditation movement. He did not institute meditation centres himself, but some pupils

6 The credentials of the preceptor of Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's new teacher, the The'in' Hsa-ya-daw (1763-1839), were equally impressive. The teacher of (Shin) Thok-da'tha-na' (Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's teacher) had been worshipped by Prince Tha-ra-wa-di during the reign of King Ba'gyi'daw (around 1819), and had been Head of the Order (Tha-tha-na-baing) from 1837 until his death in 1839 during the reign of Tha-ra-wa-di as king.

7 Among the activities by King Min'don' to purify the order were the following. On 2 July 1856 the members of families belonging to about ten reverend monks were honoured with titles by King Min'don' and were declared exempt from all levies. On 14 October 1860 the copying of the *Pi'ta-ka'* stones began. On 26 June 1860 the Thu'da-ma' Council was appointed. On 11 March 1865 the copying of the *Pi'ta-ka'* onto palm-leaves in gold and ordinary ink with stylus was completed. On 19 March 1865 the Thu'da-ma' Council proclaimed that all bad monks should be suppressed, promptly endorsed by King Min'don' on 21 March the same year. On 27 January 1866 (U' Nyel-ya-da-ma'), the Supreme Leader of the Religion died.

8 For information on the Burmese view of the Buddhist Synods see end-notes, *Then-ga-ya'na*

9 Please note that the cow here means something very very different from among the Hindu—it is not because it represents the incarnation of a deity, but because it is man's best friend in that they are used for ploughing the fields and provide nourishment.

10 See end-notes, 'Le-di Hsa-ya-daw'.

11 Hla' Hlaing's (1961: 331) date, 15 June 1913 (1275), appears to be wrong.

he taught went on to set up centres teaching methods influential today. L. corresponded with Rhys-Davids and French scholars of Buddhism, and was highly regarded by foreign scholars during his life.

He died on 27 June 1923. Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 223) claims that the Le-di was not an *ya-han-da*. When he died he was heard to exclaim that he would preach in the *bya-ma* heavens, but he suspects he may well be an *a-na-gan*. This opinion is shared by Htel' Hlaing (1981a: 343), who also claims Le-di has achieved expertise in concentration meditation (*zan*).

The biography by Wun-ni-ta' (1956) does not emphasize Le-di's WM teachings. Divided in 10 chapters: 1. birth (:8-8); 2. student & novice life (:8-10); 3. life as monk & acquisition of knowledge (:17-26); 4. Arrival back in Mon-ywa (:27-39); 5. Religious work in the country (:40-101); 6. Religious work abroad (:106-141); 7. Exaltations from areas (141-169); 8. Various instructions (:170-182); 9. Written works (:183-200); 10. His demise (:202-212). (Note: LS is not alleged to be *ya-han-da* because the word used for death is *ba-wa'nat-dan san lun thi*). The Le-di wrote *A-na-pa-na' di-pa-ni* in 1903 (1265) at the house of Mandalay Kin-wun-min'gyi' (Wun-ni-ta 1956: 49), and composed *wi'pat-tha-na di-pa-ni* in Mandalay in 1914 'for the benefit of foreign Buddhists' (Wun-ni-ta' 1956: 175).

Of the works the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw wrote, 16 were in Pali, but no less than 60 were in Burmese. As Stewart (n.d.) noted:

'Original Burmese works on religious subjects are a development of the present century. The volume of literature is immense, and the number of authors very large, as if the majority had been satisfied with seeing themselves in print once. By far the most prolific writer was the Ledi Sayadaw, A.M.P., D.Lit. (died 1923, aged 77), who treated the philosophy of Buddhism in a style intelligible to people of moderate education and also dealt with questions of practical morality. He advocated the publication of the Vinaya in Burmese, which has now been done—probably against the wish of the Order as a whole. Many of the Ledi Sayadaw's works are still being reprinted and are well worth buying if only as illustrations of the range of Burmese prose in the hands of one who was a master of his subject and of his language... The Ledi Sayadaw was in demand throughout the length and breadth of Burma and in his intellectual prime about 1905 to 1915 there can have been few more powerful preachers. A profound student of Buddhism, and earnestly convinced of its truth, he had made some study of other religions—Hinduism, Mahomedanism and Christianity. He had large charity, a thorough knowledge of human nature, a delightful sense of humour and a fine voice. His effortless eloquence held immense audiences rapt. A visit from him was supposed to exorcise plague. If he took advantage of this belief, it was only to preach Buddhism as a living rule of life.'

Burmese

Wun-ni-ta', Le-di U' (1956)

Hla' Baing, Le-di U' (1967)

MSK (Vol. 12, pp. 116-120)

Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 221-224, 301 on the relationship with the Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw)

Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 123-127)

Htel' Hlaing (1981a: 288-342, 662-4)

Hpa-ya'hpyu Hsa-ya-daw (1928: 288, 192)

English

Le-di Hsa-ya-daw [n.a.] (1961)

King (1980: pp. 122, 125, 136; and lay meditation 120-21; quoted 77, 119, 120-21)

Mendelson (1975: 94, 145, 198n, 283)

Than Tun (n.d.: 4,9)

3rd party 1968

Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw

Thaw'ba-na', U'

(1904-1982)

For details on his life, see chapter 7.

Burmese

Thi-la-nan-da (1974, 1982)

Htel' Hlaing (1981a: 19-22, 459)

Aung Myin' (1952)

Ba' Than (1966)

English

Thi-la-nan-da (1982)

King (1980: meditation method, 132-37; Sunlun critique of, 140, 141-42, 143)

Mendelson (1975: 267-268, 277-278, 280, 293, 315, 316, 354; Sir U Thwin 265, 266, 271, 274)

Kornfield (1977: 51-82)

Nyanaponika (1962: 86-87, 94, 106)

Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw, Zei-da-wun Mu-la'

Na-ra-da', U'

(1869-1954)

His biography (1958: 203-08) gives 107 meditation centres teaching his methods, though some of these, e.g. those of the Ma-ha-si and Taung-pu-lu', should now be treated as new traditions.

Born on 16 January 1869 in Kan-gyi'gon' Village (10 miles north of the town Sa-gaing' and west of Min'gun'). Named Maung Tha Byaw', he had three sisters. His father was from Kyauk-pa-nan Village (1 mile south of Kan-gyi'gon'), and his mother from Kan-gyi'gon' Village.

He became a novice at age of 14 with Saw'ke' Kyaung' Hsa-ya-daw. He left monkhood for a while at age 17 when the English took Upper Burma, but reentered under a cousin (*la-wun-gwe naung-daw*), Hsa-ya-daw U' Lek-hka-na, at Man-gyi'su'taw'ya' Monastery, east of Kan-gyi'gon' Village, where he was ordained a monk in 1887 (1249).

He went to study the scriptures with U' Ya-zein-da' from Min'gun'taung-baw-gyi' Monastery. Then he went variously to: Mo'gaung Monastery in Mandalay, Dak-hki'na' wun Monastery, Mya'daung Monastery, and San Kyaung' Monastery. He then went to Lower Burma to study with Wei-lu'wun Hsa-ya-daw in Shwei-daung Myo'. He returned to Min'gun'taung-baw Monastery where he continued his studies. He disrobed after 6 rainy seasons for his sisters, but returned to the monkhood after more than a year in 1896, this time under the famous A-le-taw'ya' Hsa-ya-daw U' Myit-zu.

Na-ra-da' first developed interest in meditation under A-le-taw'ya' Hsa-ya-daw U' Myit-zu-tha, but the Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw is alleged to have said that 'U' Myit-zu-tha did not distinguish between this and that method of the *tha-di'pat-han* practice' (Teik-hka-sa-ra' 1958: 35). When A-le-taw'ya' asked what he wanted, Min'gun' replied '*neik-bar'*', to which A-le-taw'ya' replied with a phrase taken from *tha-di'pat-han thok*. Min'gun', dissatisfied, went on to find out (1958: 36-7).

At age 37 he moved 4 furlongs west of A-le-taw'ya' Monastery into his own little meditation monastery. At age 40 (1908) he became a meditation teacher. In 1911 a new meditation centre was built in Myo' Hla' by U' San Dun' (named Myo' Hla' Bo-de'gon' Ka-ma-htan' Hta-na') where he taught meditation for 2 rainy seasons. He then left for Tha-hton, where the Zei-da-wun Monastery was built for him. Here he taught and wrote about WM.

He died 16 May 1954.

Burmese

Teik-hka-sa-ra' (1958)

Myat Thein¹³ Htun¹⁴, U¹⁵ (1896-?)

Born on 28 August 1896 in Kyauk-chaung-ga-lei¹⁶ Village, Lei¹⁷myet-hra Township (Hin-tha-da¹⁸ District) from parents U¹⁹ Shan²⁰gyi²¹ and Daw Su²². He studied with various people at various schools, including with U²³ Ba²⁴ Hkin, U²⁵ Htun²⁶ Ei²⁷, U²⁸ Tik, U²⁹ Shwei Thauang, and U³⁰ Shwei Lon, until at the age of 7 he went to study with U³¹ Min-ga-la-tha-mi. Many of his relatives at that time were either monks or nuns.

At the age of 12, after his mother's death, he went to be novitiated at A-nauk-pyin-hsin-de³² Monastery in Mandalay, where he studied under U³³ Tei-za³⁴ and U³⁵ Ka-wein-da³⁶ for one rainy season. His monk title was Shin Thu³⁷ma-na³⁸. In 1907 (1269) he went to study with U³⁹ Tha-ga-ra⁴⁰ at Si-ma-gon⁴¹ Monastery at Ha⁴²lin⁴³gyi⁴⁴ Village in Wet-lek Township (Shwei-bo District), where he remained until age 17 years old. He did not enjoy novice life particularly, but he loved to study. At age 17 he read Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's books.

Burmese

Myat Thein¹³ Htun¹⁴, U¹⁵ (p.d.)

Nya-na⁴⁵sa-gi Hsa-ya-daw

7A-d⁴⁶mauk-hka⁴⁷

(1901-7)

Born in San⁴⁸aing Village (one mile north of Tha-yek-Myo⁴⁹) on 12 January 1901. The biography starts with the remarkable fact that the Hsa-ya-daw was born in the same month (9th of Pya-tho-la⁵⁰zok), same day (Saturday), and the same time (4:20 a.m.) as the National Independence Declaration Day of Burma. His parents were U⁵¹ Bo⁵² and Daw Shwei. At the age of 5 he was sent to his grandfather Pa-li⁵³ Hsa-ya-gyi⁵⁴ U⁵⁵ Hpyei in Rangoon (Hpon⁵⁶gyi⁵⁷ Street) who had him taught at the five storey U⁵⁸ Ti⁵⁹ Tha-tha-na⁶⁰ monastery. At the age of 13 his grandfather sent him to Mandalay where he studied under Pan⁶¹daung⁶² Hsa-ya-gyi⁶³ at Shwei-ky-aung⁶⁴gyi⁶⁵ in Mandalay.

He was then sent to Taung-byin-shwei-yel⁶⁶zaung-daik, and from there to Pa-hkok-ku. He studied for 4 years and 4 months at Hsu⁶⁷taung-pye⁶⁸ Monastery in Pan⁶⁹taung⁷⁰myo⁷¹ (near Prome). He reached the 12 rainy seasons in monkhood with Hsa-ya-daw U⁷² Na-ra-da⁷³ in his monastery in Ma-u-lei⁷⁴ Village. He then travelled a great deal studying at various monasteries in Tha-yet⁷⁵myo⁷⁶, Tha-ra⁷⁷waw⁷⁸myo⁷⁹, Hin-tha-ta⁸⁰myo⁸¹, Ma-u-bin⁸²myo⁸³, A-paung⁸⁴myo⁸⁵, Moulmein (at Mei-da-wi Monastery), and Bi-lu⁸⁶kyun⁸⁷kun-the⁸⁸ Village until he had 20 rainy seasons in the order.

On 8 September 1938 he read a book by meditation teacher Hsa-ya Thet⁸⁹gyi⁹⁰ at Da-la⁹¹myo⁹²pyaw-bwe⁹³gyi⁹⁴ Village. He had never met this method before. He tried it and found it very successful. During the war he taught meditation to monks fleeing from the bombing.

He has visited about 550 places, travelled 147,030 miles, and taught meditation in 37 places. In 1975 he was still alive.

Burmese

Sein-ya-du⁹⁵tha-bin (1976)

Htei⁹⁶ Hlaing (1978: 298-299): about the foundation of the meditation centre

Nyaung-lun⁹⁷ Hsa-ya-daw

Mei-da-wi Shin

(1864-1933)

Born on 3 March 1864 in Kan-dek-aing Village west of

Meik⁹⁸hti⁹⁹la-my¹⁰⁰o¹⁰¹ from parents U¹⁰² Hmok and Daw Yon. Though at that time there were few, if any, preachers—and meditation work (ka¹⁰³ma¹⁰⁴htan¹⁰⁵ a¹⁰⁶lok), which is behind the establishment of practice (pa¹⁰⁷di¹⁰⁸pat¹⁰⁹ta¹¹⁰ya¹¹¹ te¹¹²), was almost entirely absent, his mother was deeply interested in meditation while pregnant of him, and got as much as could be explained about it from Hsa-ya-daw U¹¹³ Kei-tha-ra¹¹⁴, her nephew¹¹⁵ from the monastery in Ain¹¹⁶ Village.

Born on 19 February 1868¹¹⁷ from parents U¹¹⁸ Hmok and Daw Yon in Kan-htek-aing Village west of Meik¹¹⁹hti¹²⁰la-my¹²¹o¹²². At the age of 7 he went to study with his cousin Hsa-ya-daw U¹²³ Kei-tha-ra¹²⁴ in the monastery of Ain¹²⁵ Village, and novitiated at the same at the age of 12. He was not like normal novices because he wanted to renounce ('go into the forest'), and at every opportunity he sought out an isolated spot and practice eating from a single bowl (pat¹²⁶ta¹²⁷baing¹²⁸du¹²⁹din) and in a single sitting (ei¹³⁰ka¹³¹du¹³²din). Since this was not popular in those days this was only due to his perfections (pa¹³³ra¹³⁴mi). He ordained in the same monastery as a monk, and performed both scriptural learning and practice.

He moved to Mandalay to Taung-byin-hpa¹³⁵ya¹³⁶ Monastery where he stayed two rainy seasons, after which he returned to his preceptor's monastery. When he was briefly put in charge of the monastery at Shwei-o¹³⁷win Village by his preceptor, he met Mo¹³⁸nan¹³⁹gon¹⁴⁰ Hsa-ya-daw. He moved with permission from his preceptor to this monk's monastery in Mo¹⁴¹nan¹⁴²gon¹⁴³ Village, two miles southeast of Pyaw-bwe¹⁴⁴myo¹⁴⁵ after he had five rainy seasons as a monk, and he gradually became the Hsa-ya-daw's right hand monk. But after having studied and taught for 15 years at this monastery, although very enjoyable and pleasant, it impeded him in fulfilling his perfections (pa¹⁴⁶ra¹⁴⁷mi) in renunciation. Therefore, after 20 rainy seasons as a monk, he renounced to Min¹⁴⁸lo Hill, north of Pyaw-bwe Village and west of Shan¹⁴⁹ Village station, together with Lin¹⁵⁰zin¹⁵¹gon¹⁵².

Hsa-ya-daw, where he meditated WM. But he had to break his stay short and had to return to Mo¹⁵³nan¹⁵⁴gon¹⁵⁵ Hsa-ya-daw. After convincing this Hsa-ya-daw that renunciation was the best thing to do, in 1907 his teacher followed him into the forest near Nyaung-lun¹⁵⁶ Village, about a mile from the monastery of Hsa-ya-daw U¹⁵⁷ Zaw¹⁵⁸, a pupil of the Mo¹⁵⁹nan¹⁶⁰gon¹⁶¹ Hsa-ya-daw. This was the site where devotees built them a monastery which they dedicated to the Sangha of all four corners of the earth; once visitors came from all over, this came to be known as the Nyaung-lun¹⁶²taw¹⁶³ya¹⁶⁴ monastery. In 1909 about fifty pupil monks of the Mo¹⁶⁵nan¹⁶⁶gon¹⁶⁷ Hsa-ya-daw would come at the beginning of the rainy season to spend time in meditation. would come Mo¹⁶⁸nan¹⁶⁹gon¹⁷⁰ Hsa-ya-daw died without having worn during the time in the forest sandals, without carrying an umbrella, and without using transport. On 14 March 1913 the Mo¹⁷¹nan¹⁷²gon¹⁷³ Hsa-ya-daw died at the age of 65.

Nyaung-lun¹⁷⁴ Hsa-ya-daw, after much meditation, achieved the first mek¹⁷⁵hpo¹⁷⁶ (i.e. thau¹⁷⁷da¹⁷⁸ban) on 27 May 1920 while sitting on a chair at the Nyaung-lun¹⁷⁹taw¹⁸⁰ya¹⁸¹ Monastery, and the subsequent three stages on 3 June (in his study), 5 June (in Hpan¹⁸²hka¹⁸³bin Monastery), and 7 June (in front of the pagoda entombing the relics of the First Mo¹⁸⁴nan¹⁸⁵gon¹⁸⁶ Hsa-ya-daw) of the same year respectively. He achieved divine hearing, knowledge of extinction of cankers and recollection of former lives. He gave rulings to his pupils: not to organise festivals or music,

¹³ Later on referred to as the elder brother of the Nyaung-lun¹⁸⁷ Hsa-ya-daw (meung¹⁸⁸daung).

¹⁴ Hla¹⁸⁹ Tha-meln (1961: 142) gave Ta¹⁹⁰baung¹⁹¹la¹⁹²zok 12th in 1225, where [Nyaung-lun¹⁹³ Hsa-ya-daw] Hla¹⁹⁴ disciples (1966: 19) gave Ta¹⁹⁵baung¹⁹⁶la¹⁹⁷bye¹⁹⁸ 12th in 1229. Since the latter includes a detailed horoscope with time of birth, I assume that this source is more accurate.

not to attend or support elaborate monk funerals, not to accept offerings from monk funerals, not to hold the corpses of dead monks more than 7 days before cremation. By 1921 (1283) he had 20 pupils live in the monastery, and by 1930 (1292) there were 130, causing problems in respect of maintenance and food, and he had to set limits to the number of disciples allowed to stay permanently at the monastery. He was affirmed a *ya'han-da* by the famous Shwei-yei" Hsa-ya-daw from Mandalay.

He died (the use of *pa-ri'neik-ban san thi* implies that he is accepted to be a *ya'han-da* by the author) on 10 June 1933.

Burmese

[Nyaung-lun' Hsa-ya-daw] His disciples (1966)

Htei" Hlaing (1981: 387-433)

Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 142-143)

Kyaw Nyun' (1978: 25-6): on the relationship between the Wei-bu and the Nyaung-lun Hsa-ya-daw

Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di (1977: 306-7): Nyaung-lun' Hs. was the *ka-ma-wa hsa-ya-daw* at the ordination of Sun'lun' Hs.

Tin Hpei (1953: 49-53) on Sun'lun" answering questions posed by N. Hs.

Pan-di'da-ma', U"

(see Myat Kyaw, U")

San-di'ma, U"

(see Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw)

Shwei-min'wun Hnget-dwin' Hsa-ya-daw

(see Hnget-dwin' Hsa-ya-daw) (1831-1910)

Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw

Za-ga-ra', U"

(1822-1893)

Hla' Baing (1976: 63) noted that 'the beginning of *wi'pat-tha-na* is the lake', so WM began with the work *Gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'* from the Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw, 'after which during the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw period many other works on WM flowed very strongly.' Elsewhere, Hla' Baing (1967: 281) interpreted the following rhyme:

When the lake (in") was walled, a field (le) appeared
Upon the emerged field, the bird (hnget) descended
When the bird had descended, the cat (kyeikng)
pounced

The lake (in") was in reference to the Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw's work *Gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' Ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'*, the emerged field referred to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, the bird referred to the Hnget-dwin' Hsa-ya-daw, and the cat to the Kyaung-ban' Hsa-ya-daw.

Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw

Ka-wi', U"

(1878-1952)

Born on 4 March 1878 in Sun'lun" Village near Myin'gyan-myo' as one of three children from parents U" Than' and Daw Dok. His name was Maung Kyaw Din. He studied with the Min'gyaung Hsa-ya-daw at Myin'gyan-myo'. But he was found to be blunt in intellect and accompanied his father to work at the Deputy Commissioner's office at the age of 15. He married Ma' Shwei Yi and had five children. At age 30 he left his salaried job and went to work the fields. On 8 October 1919 (1281), while offering sesame seeds to the monks and lighting lights in a tent in front of his house in Sun'lun" Village, he asked of himself, 'what will become of me?', and the desire entered him to meditate, preach, and to enter the monastic order.

At that time he feared death. He met U" Ba' San, who explained to him about the Le-di *a-na-pa-na'* method. The Kyaw Din wanted it, and upon asking

whether one could meditate without studying he was pleased to find out that this was not necessary. He then practiced on a chair in the back room noting the breath go in and out. He then met U" Shwei Lok, a pupil of the Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw, who explained to him how 'noting' (*tha-di'*) was important and produced merit. In the absence of a teacher, he mixed the two methods and was pleased to achieve concentration and see the Buddha's six colours. He discovered the virtue of subjugation of the senses, and after achieving concentration, he meditated on sensations (*wei-da-na*). Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 305-6) claimed that the Sun'lun" achieved, falling on the 14th day after every full moon respectively: 1) *thaw'da pat-ti' mek-hpo* on 12 August 1920; 2) *tha-ga-da-ga-mi' mek-hpo* on 11 September 1920; *a-na-gan mek-hpo* on 10 October 1920; and, finally, *a-ra-hat-ta' mek-hpo* on 9 November 1921. On 1 November 1920 he had already been novitiated under Hpon'daw-gyi" U" Kyauk (U" Wi-ri'ya'), and on 4 April 1920 (1282) he ordained as a monk at the age of 44 in the ordination hall of the Meik-ti'la-myo' at Yei-le Monastery, with as preceptor Hin'yan-kin" Hsa-ya-daw, and as *ka-ma-wa hsa-ya-daw* the Nyaung-lun' Hsa-ya-daw. He stayed on at this monastery until 25 October 1923 (1285), when he moved to a small monastery donated to him, then known as Sun'lun"chaw monastery, but later known as Sun'lun"gu Monastery when it was expanded with caves. He lived in Sun'lun"gu Monastery in Maung-yin-paw-chauk canyon and taught WM.

On 2 September 1948 Prime Minister U" Nu' invited the Sun'lun" to Rangoon, where he stayed for seven days in his residential gardens in a makeshift meditation hut. The questions U" Nu' asked are in Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 308-9). In 1951 (1313) he was offered by his pupils a monastery in Bauk-haw (now Taung-ok-ka-la-pa')

The Sun'lun" died (*pa-ri'neik-ban san thi*) as used, suggesting he is a *ya'han-da* on 17 May 1952. As reported in *The Burman* (5/6/1952), a doctor from the Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha, confirmed that his remains did not decompose after death and did not smell. The remains were entombed in a pagoda in which flowers and water put 15 years earlier had been well preserved. His funeral was attended by the President Sat Shwei Thaik and by PM U" Nu'. Between 1972 and 1973 the Sun'lun" biography was carved in stone. Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 342-351) claimed two pupils of the Sun'lun" Hsa-ya-daw to have become *ya'han-da* (U" Ma-ni'tha-ra', and U" Kaw'tha-la'). Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1976: 253-62) lists 143 meditation centres in the Sun'lun" tradition all over Burma, and gives a list of eight foreigners who meditated in Burma.

Burmese

Tin Hpei (1953)

Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1976, 1977: 288-337).

Htei" Hlaing (1981: 528-579).

Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 160-161).

Kyaw Nyun' (1978: 25-6)

[Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw] (1972)

Htei" Hlaing (1978: 111): re. Hsa-ya That-gyi"

English

Kornfield (1977: 83-5)

King (1980: meditation method, 137-144, 153 n6;

breath-touch use in, 139; control versus

observation in, 143-44; as direct and intense, 138;

elimination of concepts in, 139ff, 144; three main

features of, 141-42; Sunlun Sayadaw, 137; sayings

of, 141-42, Sunlun Shin Vinaya, quoted 138-39)

Mendelson (1975: Myingyan Sunlun group 315;

Sunlun Sayadaw 145)

Taung-pu'lu' Hsa-ya-daw
Shin Nan-di'ya'

(1897-7)

Born on 20 March 1897 in Te'zu Village in Wun'dwin Township (Meik-hi-la District) from hill farmer parents U' Yan and Daw Shwei The'. His name was Maung Paw-la.

At the age of 7 his parents entrusted him to U' Tei-za', the original Hsa-ya-daw of Yei-wun Monastery in Te'zu Village. At age 14 he became a novice and at age 21 in 1917 (1279) a monk, at the same monastery with the same monk as preceptor. After five rainy seasons as a monk, he moved to study in Mandalay with Hsa-ya-daw A-shin A-sa-ra' and other Hsa-ya-daws from Shwei-bo-kyau' in Dak-hkein-na-ra-ma' hpa-ya'gyi' Monastery. He kept the single-bowl austerity (*pat-da-baing du-din*). He then went to study with Hsa-ya-daw U' Tha-tha-na' from Pak-hkok-ku Monastery. In 1925 he moved to Tha-zi upon the invitation of Yei-le Hsa-ya-daw, who was his younger brother.

In 1937 he went to study WM at the Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw in Tha-hton, where he stayed for two years. He then studied a further two years at Hkan-yun' Village Monastery six miles from Moulmein. In 1941 he returned from Lower Burma to his village of birth, where he practiced WM and the austerities in the forest for 12 years. He did not stay in one place, but spent time meditating at Kyauk-hsin-taw'ya', where he kept the 13 austerities (*du-din*), and in Tha-pya'chaung.

When he was meditating near to Taung-pu'lu' Hill, a dam project was being implemented by U' San Ngyein from the Irrigation Dept., who offered him a little monastery in 1951, which became known as the Taung-pu'lu' Yei-k-tha, and Shin Nan-di'ya' became known as the Taung-pu'lu' Hsa-ya-daw. He became known as the Ka-ba-ei' Hsa-ya-daw in 1953, when he and 12 of his pupil monks were invited by U' San Ngyein to the 'laying of the noble brick' of this new Buddhist centre in Rangoon, and for raising the umbrella on the Ka-ba-ei' Pagoda. He taught WM to many pupils, and travelled abroad to teach in India and America.

Burmese
Wi'thu'da (1980)

English
Than Htun (n.d.: 70)
Kornfield (1977: 185-192)

The'in'gu Hsa-ya-daw
Ok-ka-ha', U'

(1901-1973)

Born in 1901. Became a monk in 1961. Died on 8 July 1973 at the age of 62, with 12 years in the monkhood. A vast funeral was held quite unlike that of meditation monks.

The WM methods of this Hsa-ya-daw are seen by many as unorthodox (e.g. the author Min-ga-la U' Aung Myin'). Monk disciples are allowed to eat at night and the monks do not observe the Vinaya rules too strictly. The The'in'gu claims he found his own method. From Bo (1977) it would appear that many government and party officials frequented this monk.

Burmese
Bo, Maung (1977)

Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw
Ti'law'ka', U'

(1871-1937)

A pupil of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. Born on 12 October 1871 (1233) in Hkaw'than-di Village in Bon'kyi in Ban'gyi District west of Mon-ywa. His parents were U' Tet Hpyo' and Daw Thi. He went to Hngel-pyaw'taw' Village, south of his village of birth, to study under U' Za-wa-na', the pupil of the Maung'daung Hsa-ya-daw, who was Tha-tha-na-baing during the reign of Bo'daw. Here he ordained as a novice, and as a monk in 1891 (1253).

This same year he left to study with the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw in Le-di Monastery. After five rainy seasons of study under the Le-di he began to have serious eye problems and could no longer read.

After finishing a treatise on renunciation in 1896 (1258), he started to meditate at the age of 25. In 1897 (1259), at the age of 26, he went into various forests, until he ended up at Theik-cha'daung Hill east of Kyaik-hto, Tha-hton, in 1898 (1260). He returned to the Le-di monastery in Pyin'ma-na' in 1926 (1288).

He taught Hsa-ya Thet-gyi' meditation. He died at the age of 60 on 4 August 1937 (1299) (Htei' Hlaing 1981: 499).¹⁵

Burmese
Tha-tha-na' Wi'thok-di' (1977: 221-3)
Htei' Hlaing (1981: 306-18, 481-502)
Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 145-6)
Hla' Baing (1967: 313-34)

English
Than Tun (n.d.: 4,10)

Thein', Hsa-ya
(1898-1961)

Hsa-ya Thein' was founder of the Ma-ha Baw'di' meditation centre in Mandalay. Born on 20 January 1898 (1259) in Ya'hkaing' Chaung' Village, near Pyaw-bwe-gyi' Village on the other side of Rangoon River. This was the area where Hsa-ya Thet-gyi' had his meditation centre, and Hsa-ya Thein' was a pupil of his.

His parents were Daw Lon Ma'lei' and U' Hkin. He married Daw Mi' Mi' from Mandalay, and he made his living as a trader, preaching at the same time. He founded the Ma-ha Baw'di' Meditation Centre (in Taung-byin Ma-ha-nwe-zin Quarter (next to the University, Mandalay) for which building began on 18 Feb 1950, in which he was the chief teacher until his death on 13 October 1961 after ordaining as a monk with the title U' Pyin-nya-tha-mi'. He was succeeded by Hsa-ya U' On' Maung, who was in turn succeeded by U' Myin' Sein.

Burmese
Htei' Hlaing (1978: 304-5)

English
King (1980: 121)
Byles (1962, 1965)

Thet-gyi', Ana-gan Hsa-ya
(1873-1946)

Perhaps the most influential of Burmese unordained WM teachers, who took the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw's methods to a number of influential monk and other lay teachers. Htei' Hlaing (1978: 9) alleges that there are 67 daughter centres (*hta-na' hktwe*), but this probably includes the centres set up by his many pupils.

Born on 27 June 1873 (1235) as the son of U' Kyaw

¹⁵ Hla' Baing (1964: 332) gives the date of death as 11 August 1931 (1293) at the age of 60.

Tok and Daw Ngwei U'. His name was Maung Hpo" Thet. Thet-gyi" was from a relatively wealthy background, and owned a lot of land. When he was young his family was decimated by cholera. With the risk of cholera continuing until the age of 30, this encouraged him to look for a teaching to transcend death. He spent 13 years searching for a teaching, going to teacher after teacher, into forest after forest.

Thet-gyi" claimed his method from the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw. He had taken the vow¹⁶ to teach 1,000 people. Every year after harvest he went to Upper Burma to seek the *ta-ya*" with a friend and would return only at sowing time. He did this for 14 years, and he could by then teach it. The first seven years Thet-gyi" studied *tha-ma-hla*" at (Thit-cha'daung U") Ti'law'ka'. Then he went to the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, who found his *tha-ma-hla*" too strong, finding it inhibited (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" in making a breakthrough in WM. Here he spent another seven years learning. He had 7 bit anna pieces thrown onto his body to realize impermanence. He took the vow (*thit-sa deik-htan thi*) to teach 1,000 people.¹⁷

As he approached the age of 60 in 1931 (1293) his wife Daw Hmyin died, and his health suffered. He donated a pavilion to the monastery east of the village, where he taught WM. He taught meditation to many monks, including (In-ma-gyi") Thein-daung-taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw U") Yok-kan-da-ra'.¹⁸

But he taught meditation also to many high ranking government officials. Accountant-General Ba' Hkin meditated with him for 7 days from 8 January 1937, and visited him every year to learn his method. Thet-gyi" also went occasionally to Rangoon to undergo worship (*pu-zaw ko "gwe-gyin hkan yu thi*) and to give instructions in BK's house. BK arranged that PM (U") Nu' and (U") Tin could go and meditate with Hsa-ya Thet Gyi", but because their heavy government responsibilities prevented them it was BK who had to assist with their difficulties in meditation. (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" had instructed (U") Nu' and (U") Tin that BK was like a doctor taking care of the sick. They should listen to the teaching (*ta-ya*") given by BK, and his morality, concentration and wisdom should be believed. After that, (U") Nu' invited (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" to his home in Shwei-taung-kya" Rd, where he worshipped him for one month and was taught meditation.

Hsa-ya Thet-gyi" died on 16 January 1946 (1307).¹⁹ His remains are entombed in a cave in the northern part of the Shwei-da-gon Pagoda in the A-za-ni-gon" area. He is alleged to have achieved the state of *a-na-gan*.

Burmese

Htel" Hlaing (1978)

Ko Lei" (1980: 75-88,): on his relationship to Ba' Hkin

Htel" Hlaing (1977: 335-8) on the relationship between Thet Gyi" and the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw; 492-3 on the relationship with Theik-cha'daung Hsa-ya-daw)

Thi-la', Hpon"daw-gyi" U'

(also known as Taw" Hsa-ya-daw)

(1832-1908)

Born in 1832 (8th Nat-daw-la'zan" 1194) from a trader family as one of five children in Zain"ga-nain" Village, 2 miles north of Pegu. He commenced studies at Kobin Village with Hpon"daw-gyi" U' Hmu" at age 10, under whom he novitiated at age 12 in 1844 (1206).

The mother always kept her morality and was a vegetarian. He was ordained as a monk in 1851 (1213) in the ordination hall in the compound of Kyaik-dei-yon Pagoda under the preceptor Pi-la'hkat-ywa Hpon"daw-gyi". He moved after two rainy seasons to Pegu Daung kyaung" Hsa-ya-daw-gyi" U' San-da-lin-ka-ra', where he remained three rainy seasons until 1856 (1218), when he moved to study for one rainy season with Shwei-kyet-yek Hpon"daw-gyi" U' Mei-da, at what is presently known as Kaik-hti"yo" Monastery, in Ba-zun-daung, Rangoon. In 1857 (1220) he went to study with Ka-lye-ni-taw"ya" Hpon"daw-gyi" U' Wun-na', in Pegu for one rainy season. He studied with Sa-gaing"pi-tauk-chaung Taung-yo A-ni"ya-wun-tha (Yei-ngon-daik) for one rainy season until 1958, when he moved to Mandalay to study at the A-shei"sa-lin' Monastery where he remained for one rainy season.

In 1860 (1222) U' Thi-la' became a forest monk (*a-na-mya'wa'di pok-ko*): he moved to live at pagodas, on ridges of hills, and in caves, and established a forest monastery with U' Wun-na', his old teacher who had left his monastery. In 1864 (1226) the 'Forest Sect' (*Taw"gaing*") began to make an appearance. — Hpon"daw-gyi" U' Thi-la' put great emphasis on the practice of the austerities (*du-din*) and the Vinaya. He was a vegetarian. He preached in favour of monastic residence in forest monasteries. He was the second Head (*Na-ya-ka*) of this 'Forest Sect' (*Taw"ya' Gaing*), which later merged with Shwei-gyin Sect to be named Shwei-gyin. Despite the change of name, he remained Second Nayaka. He lived at the Nyaung-lei"bin Forest Monastery until his death on 19 April 1908 (1269). He is alleged to be a *ya'han"da* (Htel" Hlaing 1978: 21,243).

Burmese

A-ni"ya' (1941)

MSK (Vol. 13, pp. 132-134) *Shwei hantle taw' 1975*

Tha-tha-na' W'i'thok-di' (1977: 191-111, 173 on relation with Gu-hpyu Hsa-ya-daw).

Htel" Hlaing (1981: 211-249)

Hla' Tha-mein (1961: 113-114)

Htel" Hlaing (1978: 21)

English

Mendelson (1975: 148, 224)

Than Tun (n.d.: 28, 19, 87)

Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw

San-di'ma, U'

(1786-1860)

(see also Kin"taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw - Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw, Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw)

Born in Shun" Shun" Tek Village in 1786 (1148). During the reign of King Shwei-bo (1837-?) the Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw had been allowed a special sect, and was awarded the title San-di'ma Bi'wun-tha'thi-ni'that-dama'da'za' Ma-ha-da-ma'ya-za-di' Ya-za-di'gu'ru'. King Min'don", the son of King Shwei-bo, worshipped him also; when he became king, he invited Thi"lon" to Mandalay, the capital. Thi"lon" did not want to come, preferring forest life instead. King Min'don" built Ya'da-na-bon-zan Monastery in Thi"lon" Village.

Recognized within the lineage of the Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw and the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw, and claimed by the first to have achieved the state of *a-na-gan*.

The Thi"lon" is known to have authored 64 treatises. In them he emphasised Buddhist practice,

¹⁶ *Thit-sa deik-htan thi*.

¹⁷ Later on in the same paragraph it is noted that the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw actually 'instructed' (Hsa-ya) Thet-gyi" to teach WM until he had taught 1000 pupils (Ko Lei" 1980: 80).

¹⁸ Htel" Hlaing (1981a: 523-28) described (Thain-daung-In"ma'gyi"taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw U") Zaw'ti'ka', who visited the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, and who must be the teacher of (U') Yok-kan-da-ra'.

¹⁹ Htel" Hlaing (129-30). Yet Ko Lei" (1980: 592) gave 14 December 1946 as his death.

and he wrote 'A treatise on meditation' (*ba-wa-na-na-ya di-pa-ni kyan*). Htei' Hlaing (1981: 155) wrote, 'I note that the Th. S. has not written treatises about his own methods of meditation, but this must be interpreted as the result of the fact that in that age there were few people who would follow, and because, as the saying goes, "meditation does not have affinity with essays". Kin'taw'ya' Hsa-ya-daw is alleged to have encouraged him to meditate, saying 'When you become a hsa-ya-daw like me, do not die with only scriptural learning (*gan'da-du-ra*)'. His emphasis on practical meditation led him into dispute with the monks who held onto scriptural learning.

He lived at the Thi'lon'ywa-taw'ya' Monastery, in Thi'lon' Village near Hseit-hkun Village (where the Ma-ha-si was born), 7-8 miles north of Shwei-bo. He was the teacher of the famous (First) Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw and the (original) Yan-gon Kyaung'daw-ya Hsa-ya-daw. Is claimed to be 'virtually the leader in the movement to purify the religion in the middle of the 19th century' (Than Tun n.d.: 17). He appears to have been recognized by the Shwei-gyin monastic sect as the leader of the religion between approx. 1819-1856, though U' Nan-da became an important contender, displacing Thi'lon' slightly after 1846. Th. S. Was taken as a model monk by King Min-don in matters scriptural learning and Buddhist practice, who tried to persuade him 'to live in his capital and take charge of the purification movement'. He did not come, Mindon offered him a monastery called 'Ya-da-na-bon-san kyaung', and the royal purification task was taken up by pupils of Thi'lon', such as U' Nan-da, who went on to author the Royal order of 15 Feb. 1856 on the purification of the religion, not long after which the Shwei-gyin sect is officially formed (Than Tun n.d.: 18). He is also recognized within the lineages of the Wei-lu-wun and Hngat-dwin sects (see Mendelson 1975: 264).

He is thought to have become an *a-na-gan* (Tin Myin' 1977: 10). Ferguson (1975: 214) spoke to a leading Shwei-gyin monk who claimed Thi'lon' was a *ya'han-da* and quotes from the history of the Shwei-gyin by the Shwei-hin-tha Hsa-ya-daw:

The Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw stayed with the ... [Lu-thu-da Kat-pi'ya'] (lay steward) at the ... Taw'ya'kyung' (forest monastery). One summer night the lay steward wanted to take a bath, so he left the Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw at the monastery and went to an artificial pond quite far from the monastery. When he arrived at the pond, he found the Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw already there, finishing his own bathing. The lay steward wondered, "How did the holy, aged Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw get to this pond in such a short time?" The Thi'lon' ordered the lay steward as follows: "Do not tell other people about this while I am still alive," and then he went back to the monastery by the heavenly route. The lay steward told the people after the Hsa-ya-daw had passed away. Thus we can realize that the Hsa-ya-daw had not only *Pa-di'pat* (the skills of meditation) but also *a-bi'nyan* (the extraordinary powers from deep meditation) ... Whether the Thi'lon' Hsa-ya-daw was completely free from worldly attachment and thus a *ya'han-da* we cannot say, since holy persons are secret and live in silence'. (Burmese transcription)

changed for consistency with the method in this thesis)

Burmese

Tha-tha-na' W'i'thok-di' (1977: 145-52).

Htei' Hlaing (1981: 144-55).

Tin Myin' (1977: 95-119).

Hla' Baing (1967: 93-4) (on an encounter with the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw)

Htei' Hlaing (1981: 145)

Tei-hka-sa-ra' (1958: 191-8)

English

Mendelson (1975: Thilon Sayadaw 95, 98, 100, 103, 364).

Ferguson (1975: 194n, 213-5, 219-20, 240)

Than Tun (n.d.: 3, 4, 16, 17, 18, 19, 45)

Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw

Kon-ma-ra', U"

(1896-1977)

Born on 12 February 1896 as one of four children from Daw Shwei-baing and U' Htun' Zan, in In-gyin'bin Village, located in Hkin-u" Township, Shwei-bo District. He began to study at In-gyin'bin Monastery under Hsa-ya-daw U' Thu'ma-na', where he was ordained in 1908 (1270) as a novice, and in 1915 as a monk. He was also taught also by the Kan-hse-taw' Monastery Hsa-ya-daw U' Wi'sa-ra'. In 1918 he went to Mandalay to study with the Ma-so'yein Hsa-ya-daw U' Thu-ri'ya'. In 1920-21 he returned to his former In-gyin'bin monastery.

In 1923 (1285) he asked permission from his preceptor to go out into the forest, and he stayed in the hills of Wei-bu-la' and Wei-ba-ra' in the near Kyauk-hsi-myo'. This is where he got his name Wei-bu from. The method he developed was based on the teachings of the Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw, whom he respected, as well as those of the Nyaung-lun' Hsa-ya-daw. He met the Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw on several occasions, and they mutually respected each other's methods.

He taught meditation from 1927 to 1977 to many meditators and he travelled and preached all over Lower Burma. He began with teaching his old Preceptor, Shin Thu-ma-na', who found the method so good that he encouraged his pupils and disciples to follow the same method. The Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw encouraged Hsa-ya-gyi' U' Ba' Hkin to teach.

He died on 26 June 1977 in In-gyin'bin meditation monastery

Burmese

Kyaw Nyun' (1978)

Htei' Hlaing (1981a: 22-3; 665-81)

Tha-tha-na' W'i'thok-di' (1977: 307, 319) on his relationship with the Sun'lun' Hsa-ya-daw

English

King (1980: 160 n2)

Mendelson (1975: 144, 145, 315)

Appendix C.

Lineages of Buddhist practice teachers

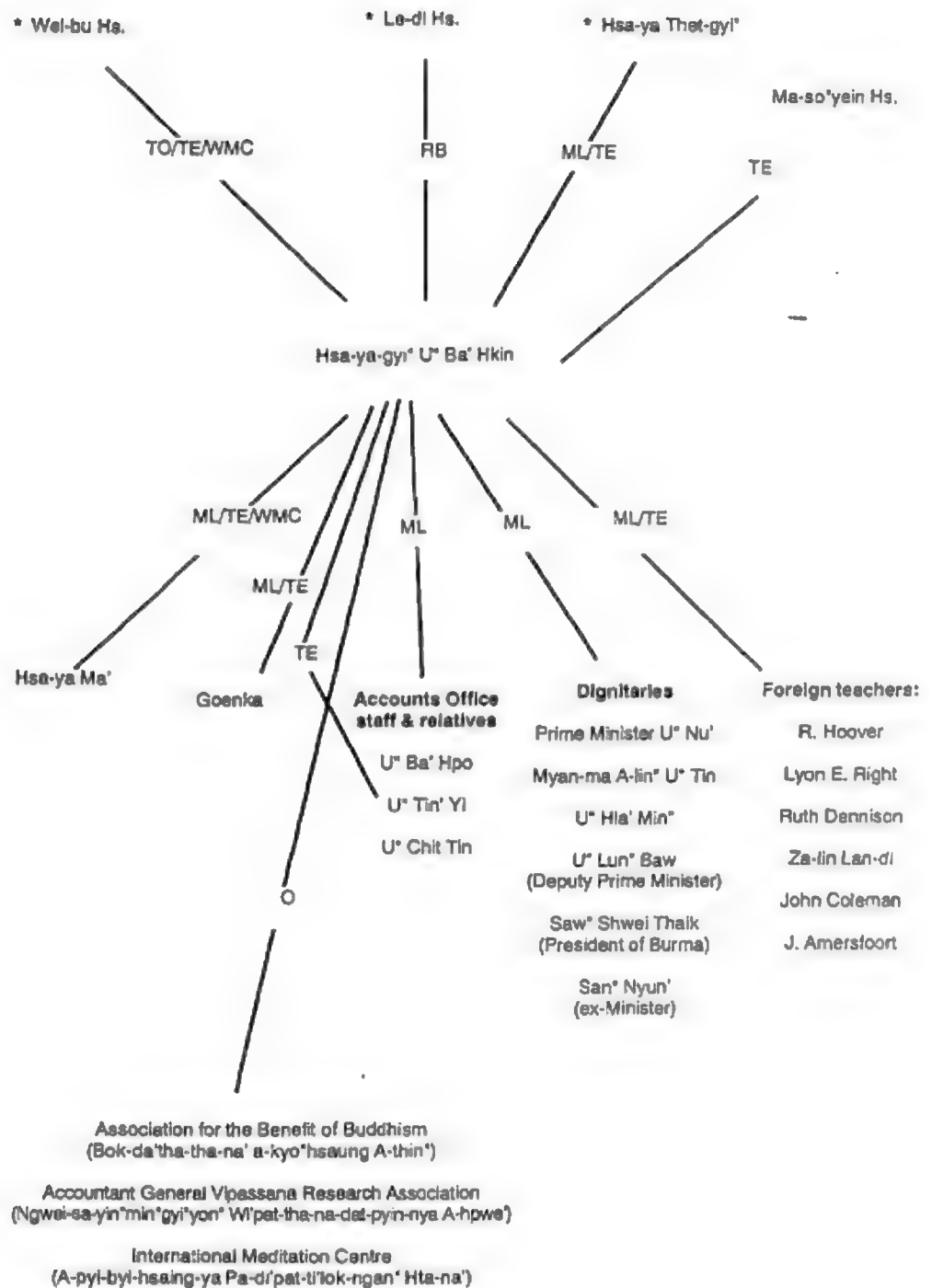
Below follow the lineages of 26 of the ⁸29 famous teachers of Buddhist practice, whose biographies were summarised in appendix ~~B~~¹. In addition to the notes in appendix ~~C~~², the following may be noted:

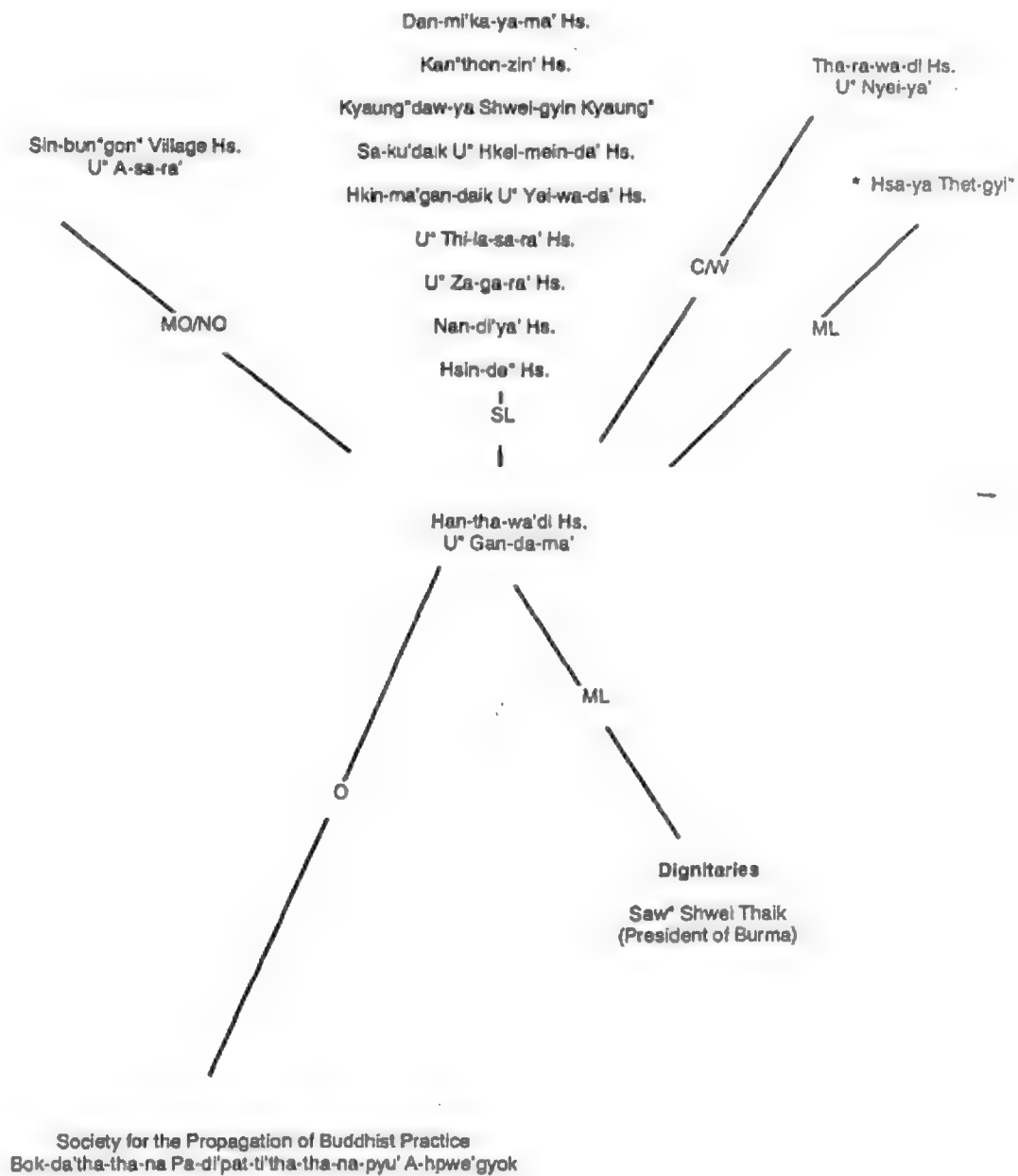
- (i) As noted in chapter 3, there is normally a distinction between a lineage based upon ordination and scriptural learning, and a lineage based on Buddhist practice.
- (ii) Some teachers have few (e.g. Thi"lon" Hs.) or no (e.g. Taung-pu'lu' or Myat Kyaw) pupils mentioned, or their lineage seems particularly empty. This is not because they have no pupils, but because it requires more work to uncover the relevant data.
- (iii) Persons entered in the upper halves of the diagrams disseminate downwards to the respective meditation teachers in the centre, who disseminate downwards to persons entered in the lower half of the diagrams. Occasionally (e.g. with the Nyaung-lun' Hsa-ya-daw) a meditation teacher teaches *his* teacher: in this case a line will depart from below the teacher moving up.

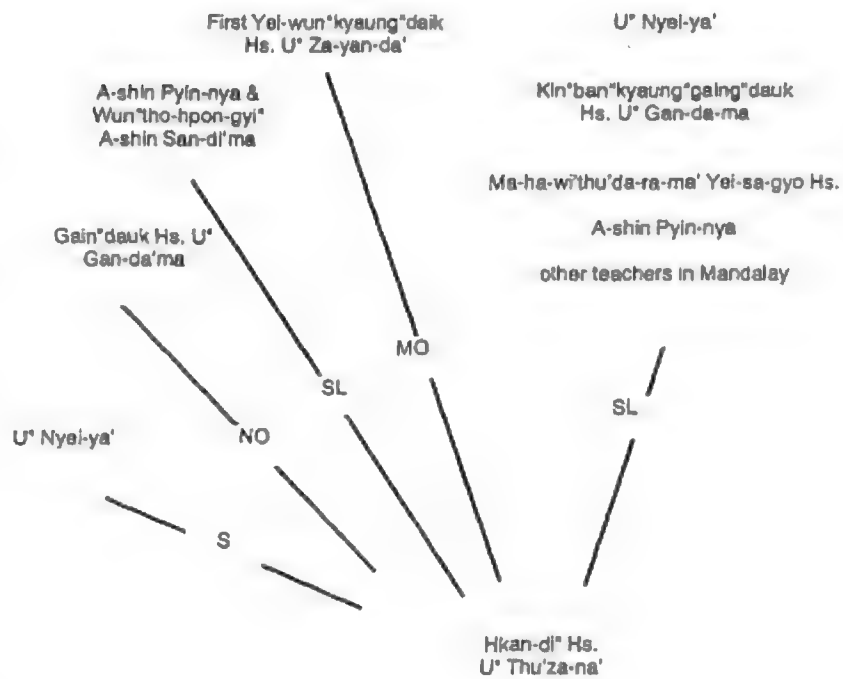
Legends

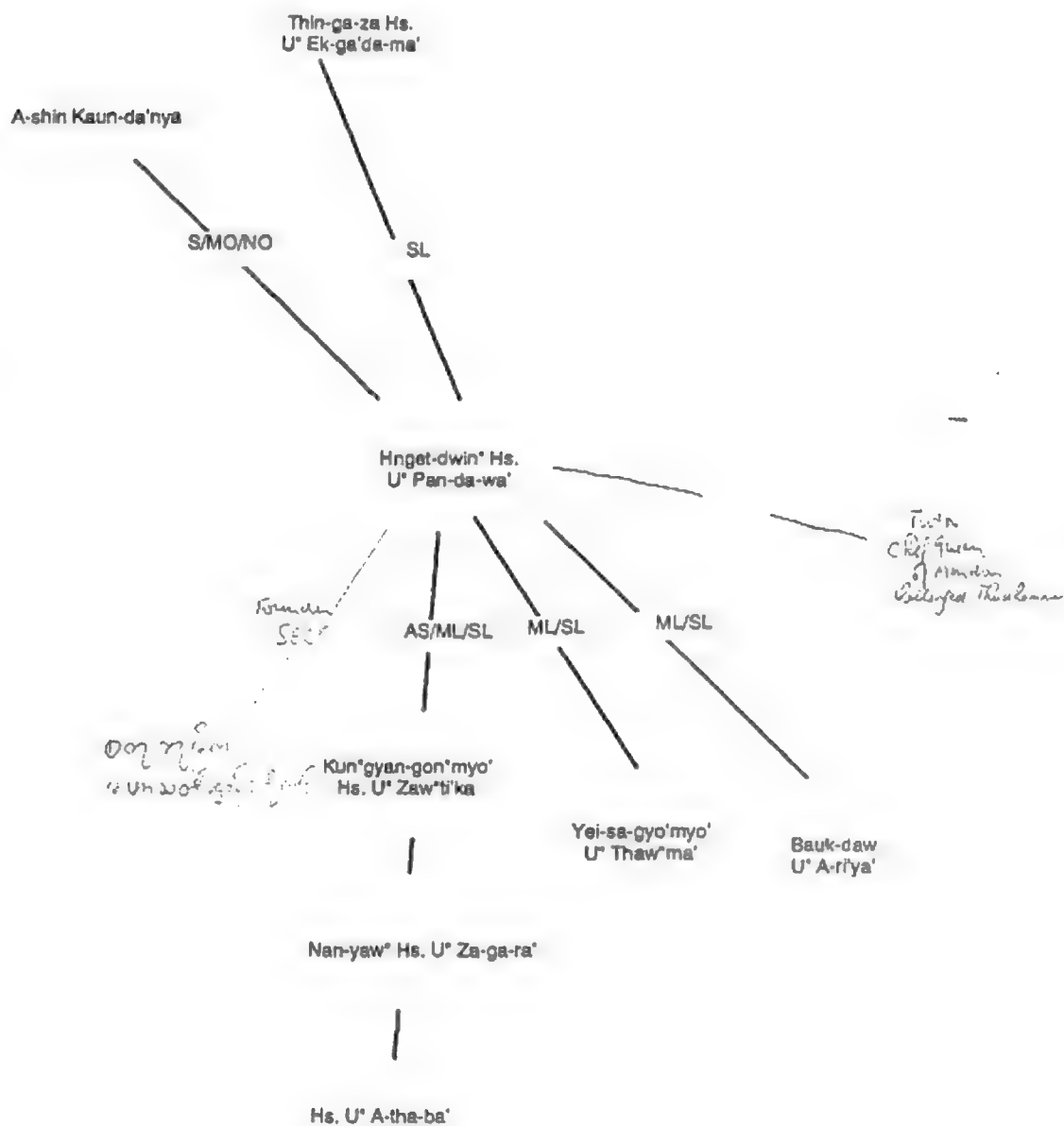
?	= Relationship unsure or not known	SL	= Scriptural learning
A	= Adversary	S	= Schooling (before novitiation)
AS	= Appointed successor	T	= Tha-ma-hta'
C	= Companion/colleague	TB	= Tha-tha-na baing (Sangharaja)
K	= Kinship link	TE	= Teaching encouraged
ML	= Meditation learning	TO	= Temporary ordination
MO	= Monk ordination	W	= Wi'pat-tha-na
NO	= Novice ordination	WMC	= WM method confirmed as good
O	= Organisation associated with	*	= Entry available in appendix B
P	= Patron	—	
R	= Share the same 'region'	Hs.	= Hsa-ya-daw
RB	= Reading books		

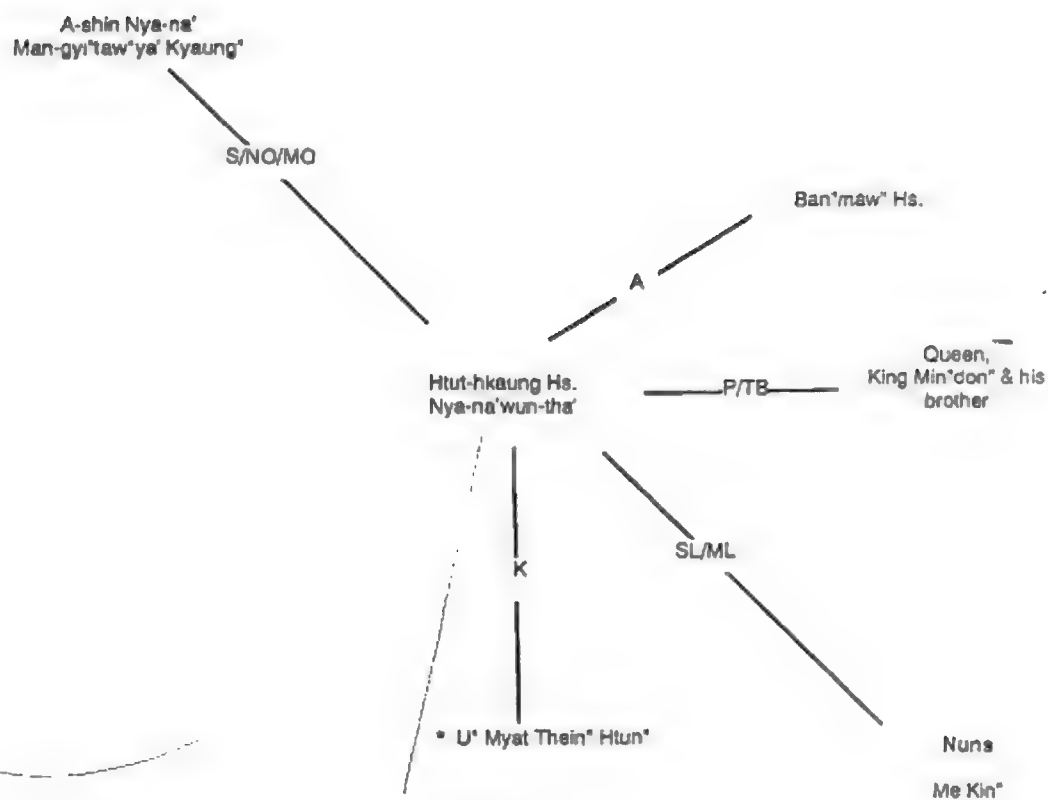
1 Minus Myat Kyaw, Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw, and the The"n"gu Hsa-ya-daw because of a lack of information.





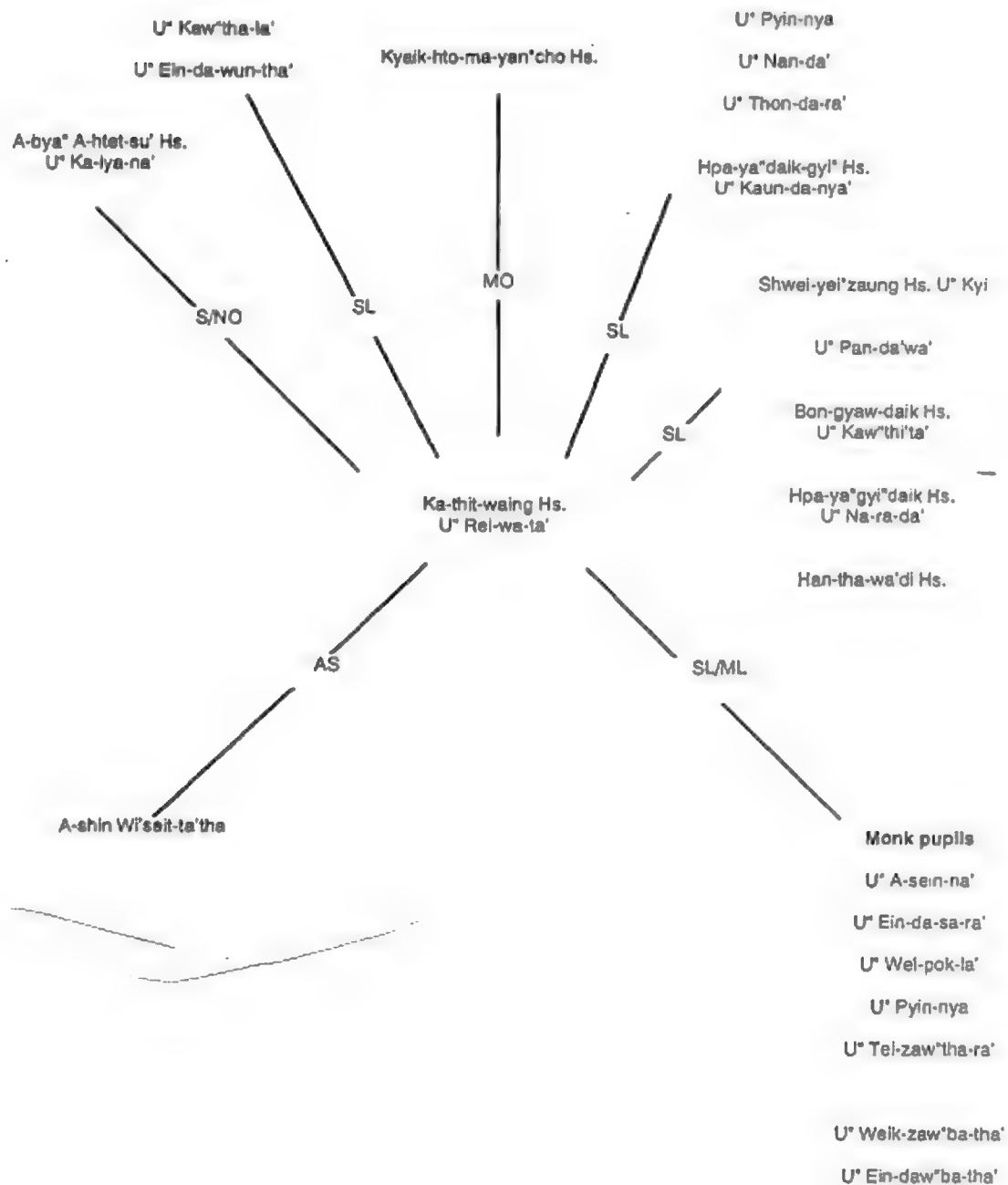


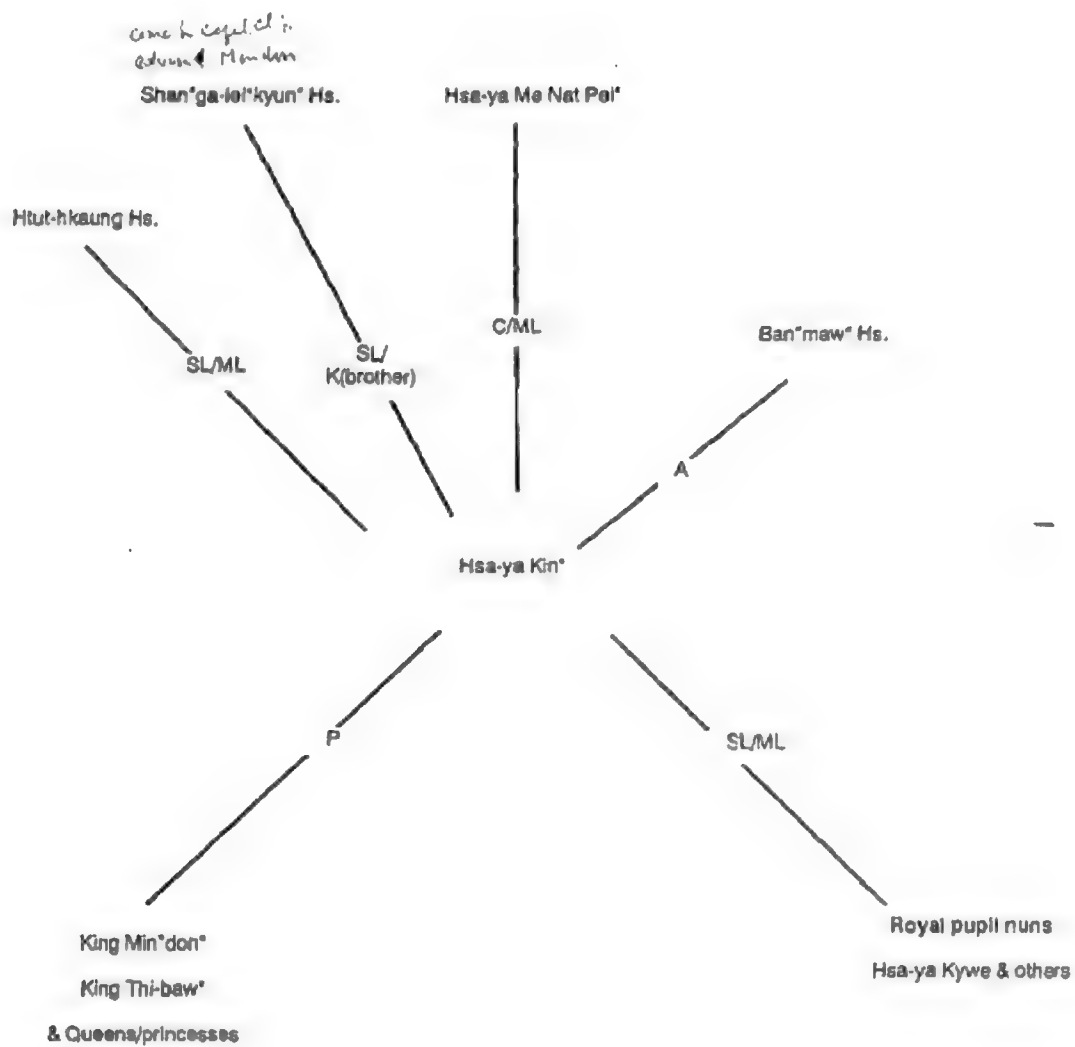


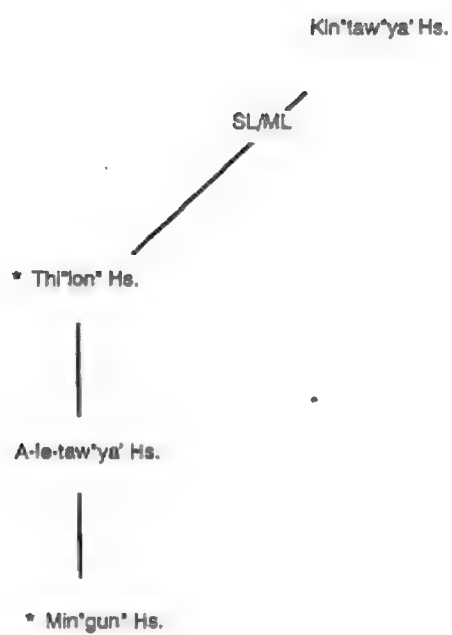


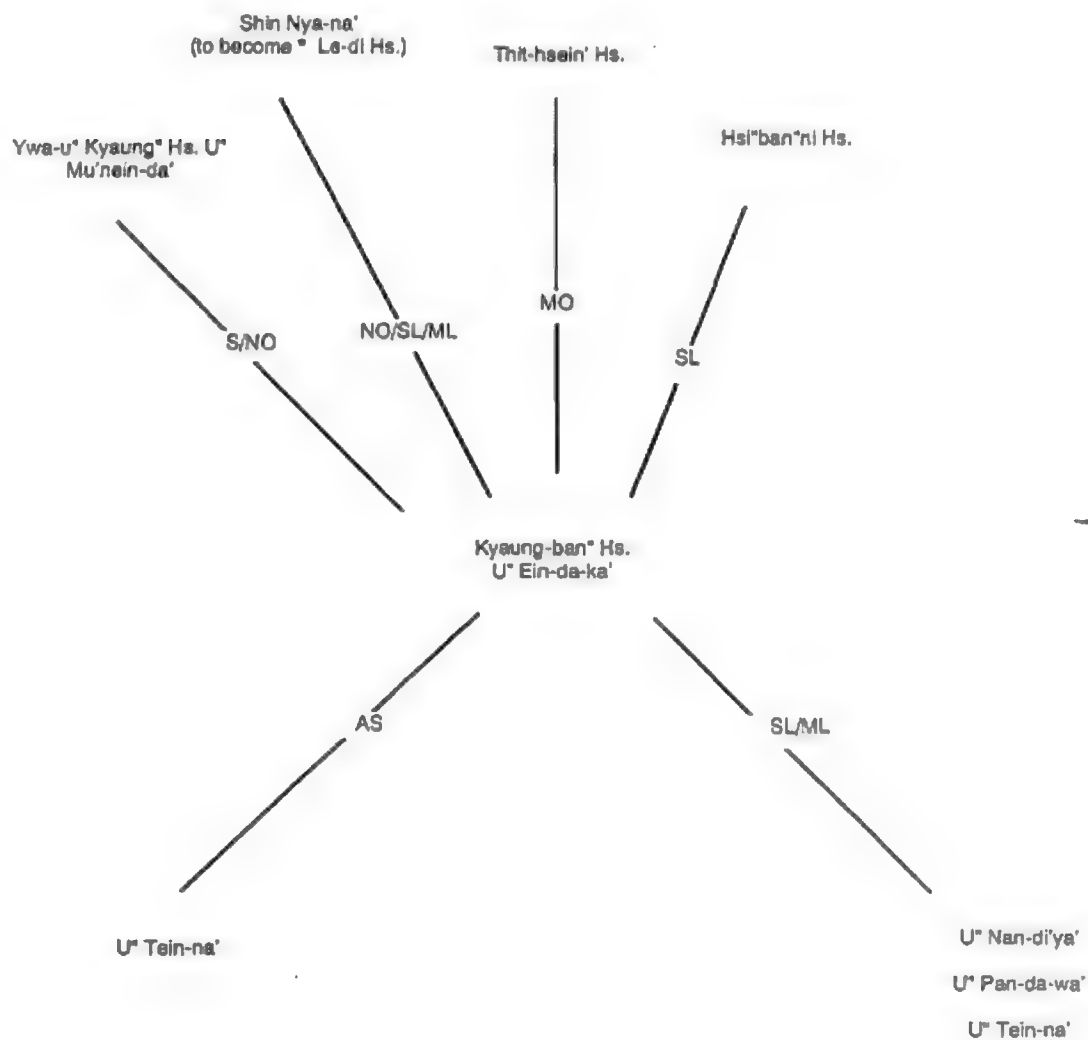
3rd Htut-hkaung
do g son etc.

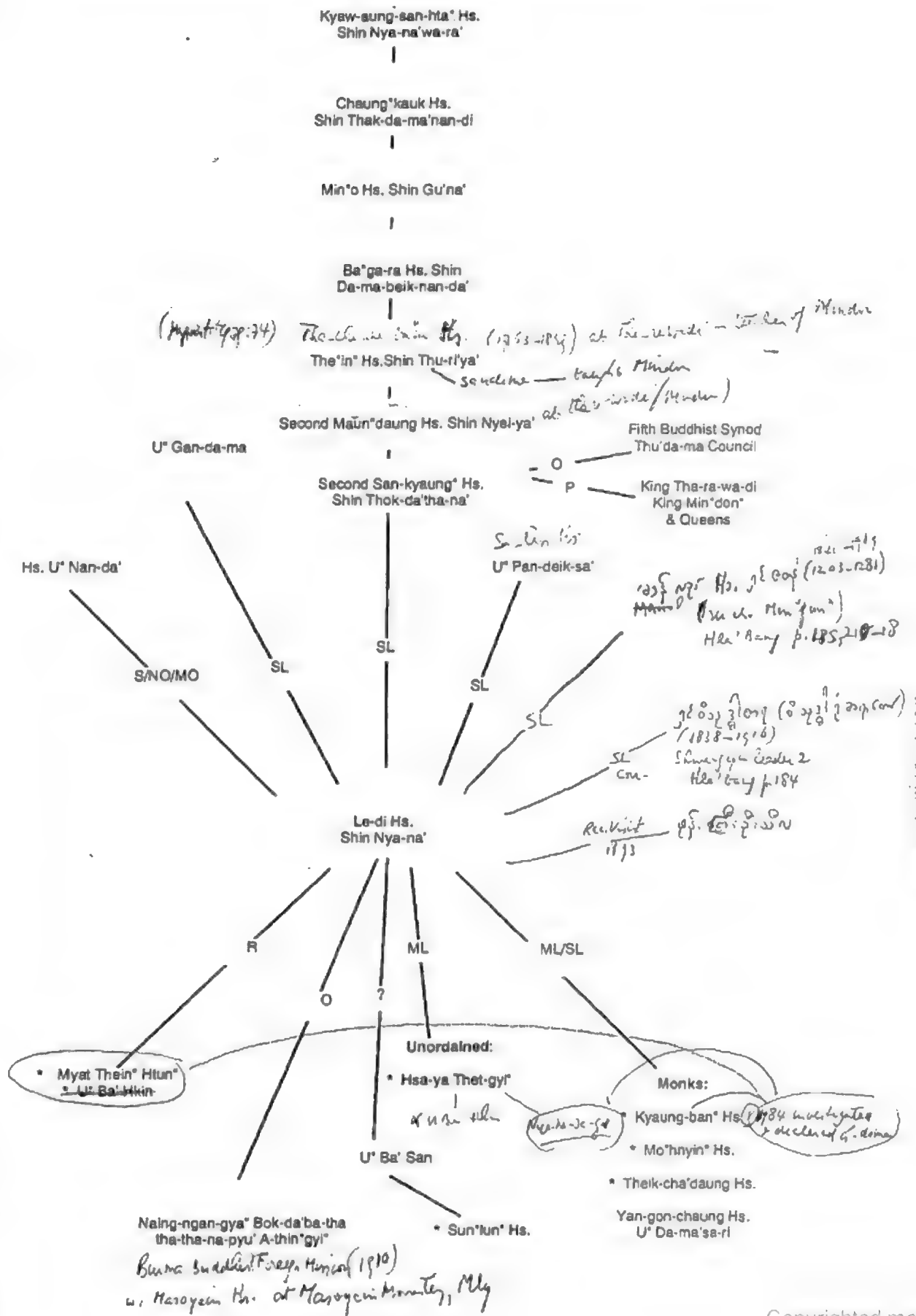
4th Htut-hkaung
Hpa-daw-gyi' & Htut-hkaung



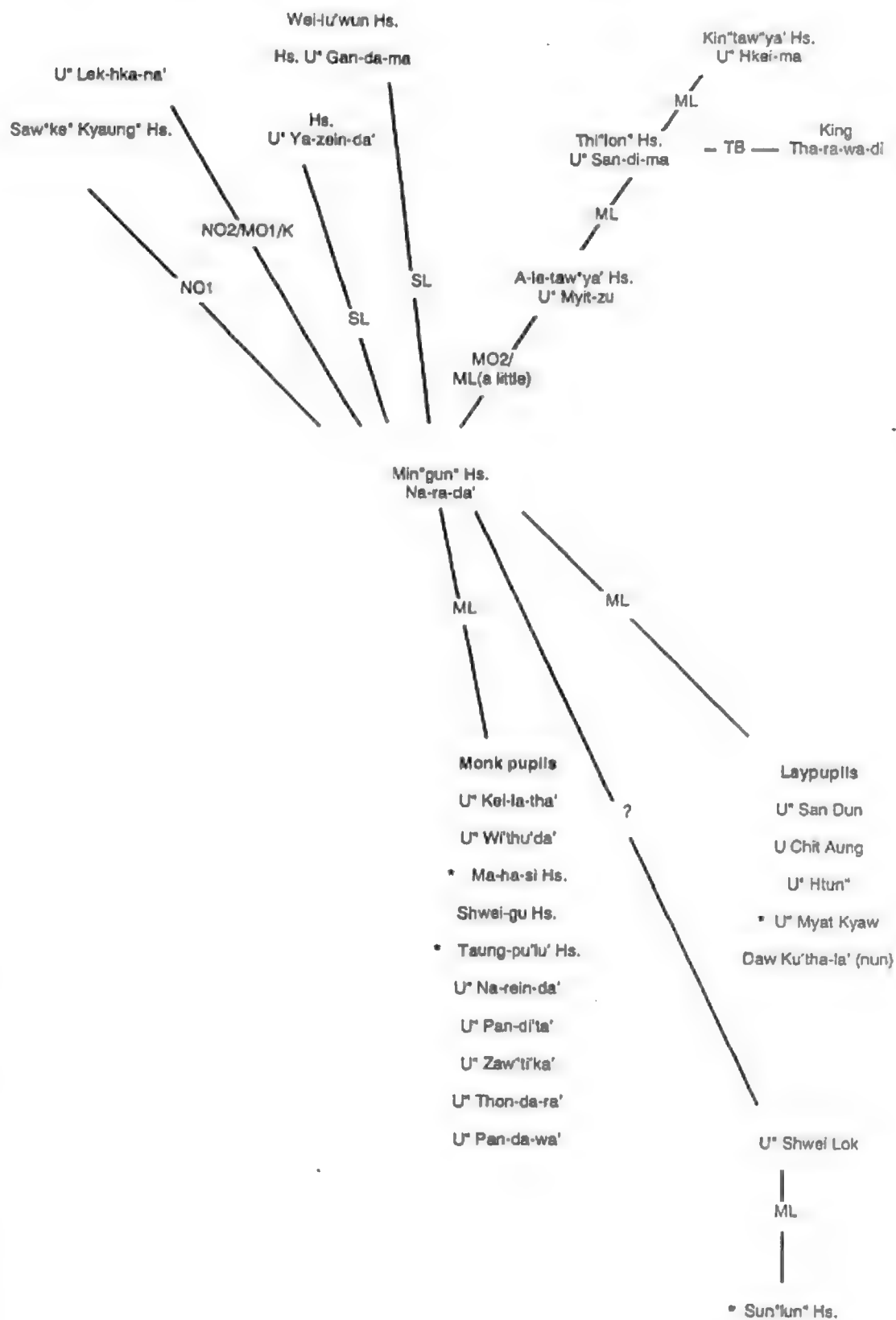


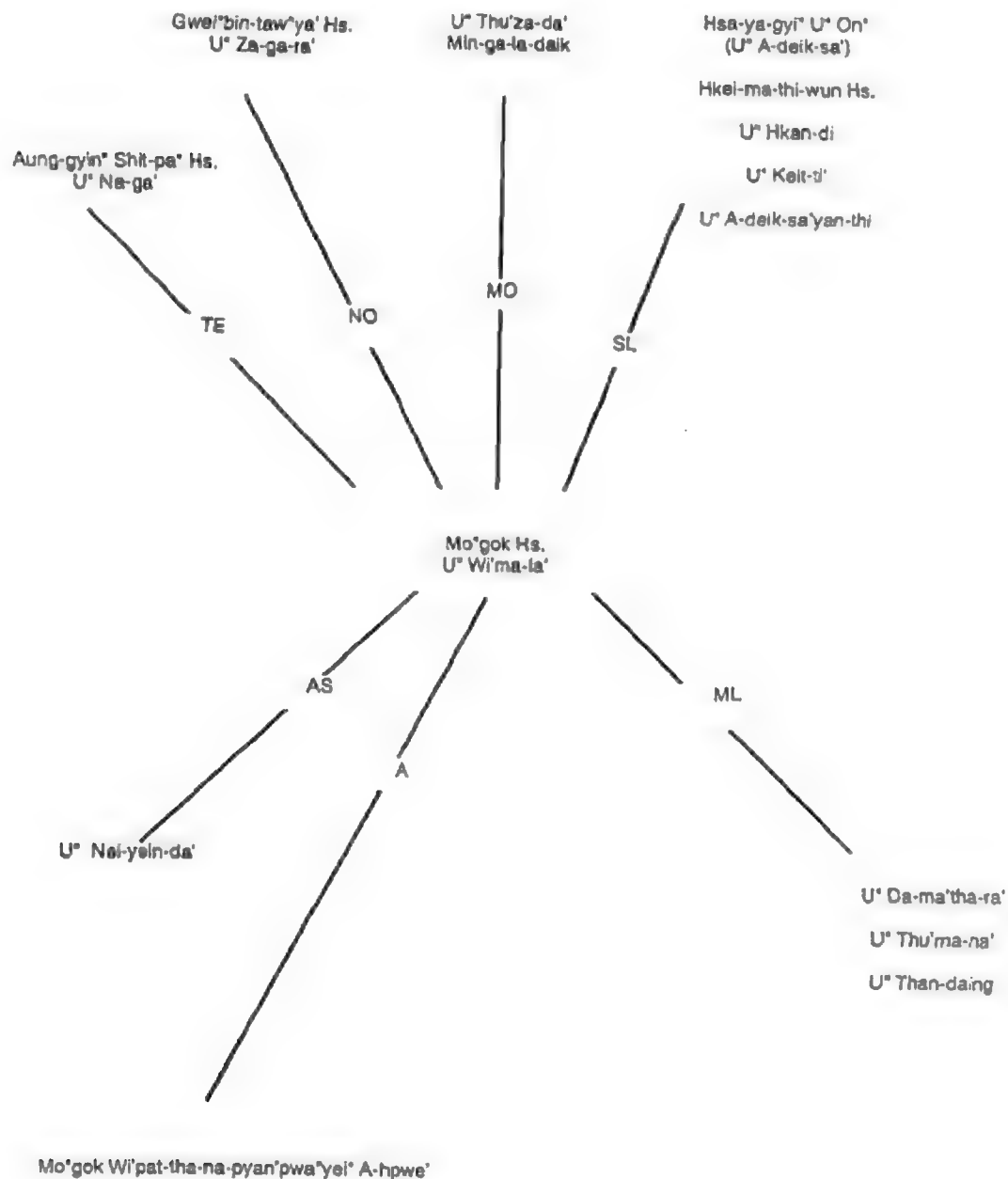


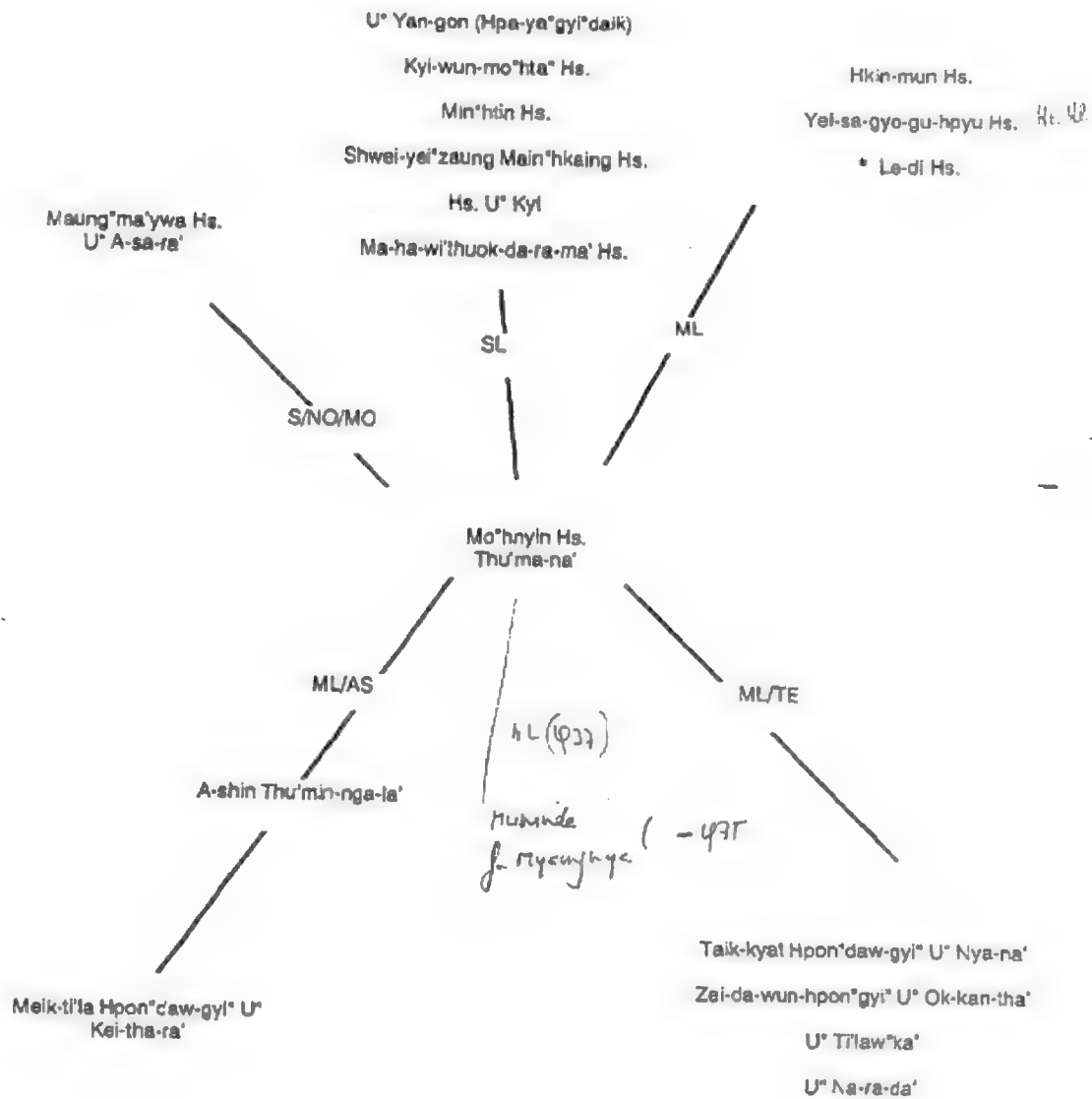






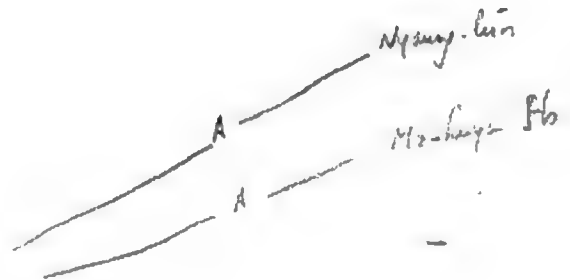




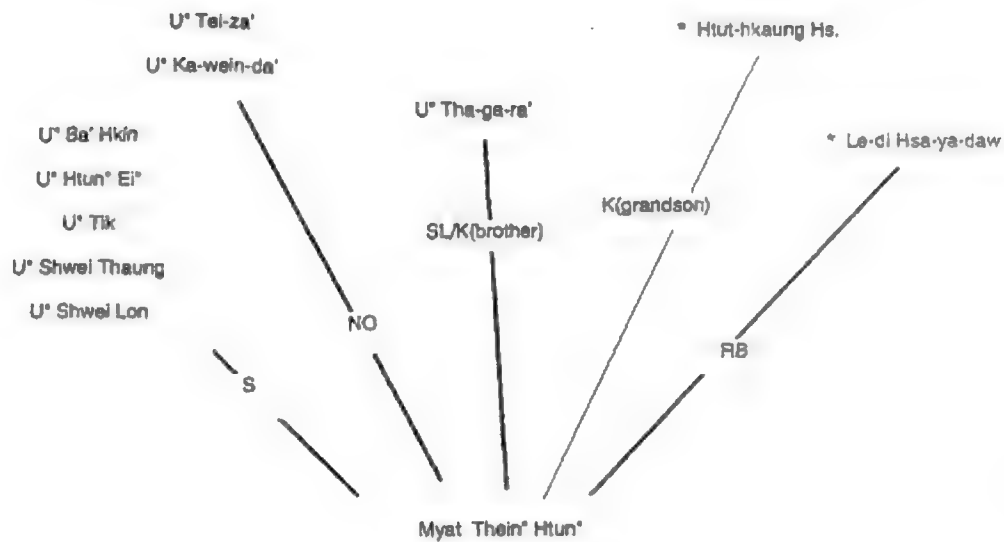


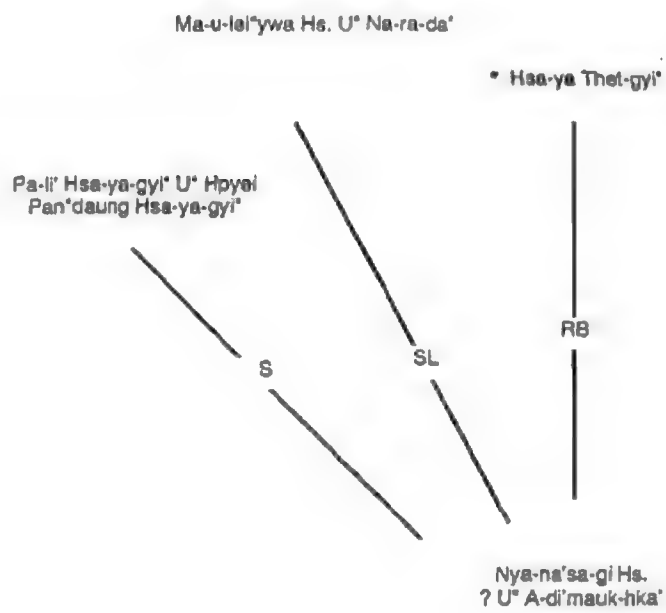
• Min'gun' Hs.

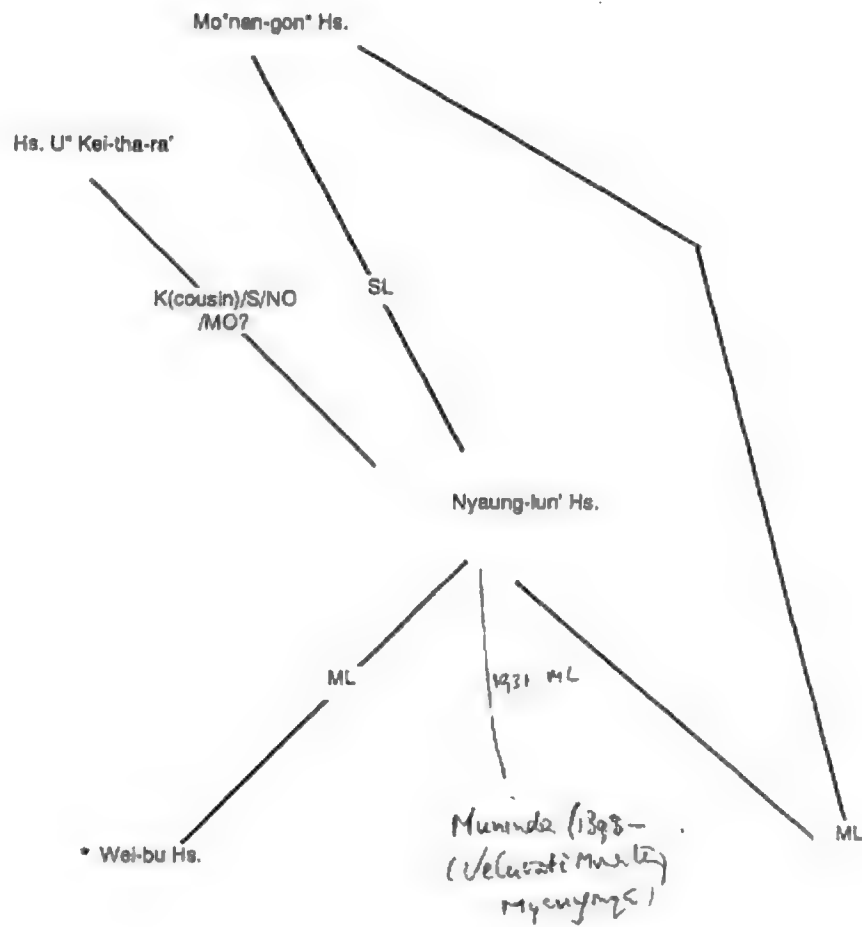
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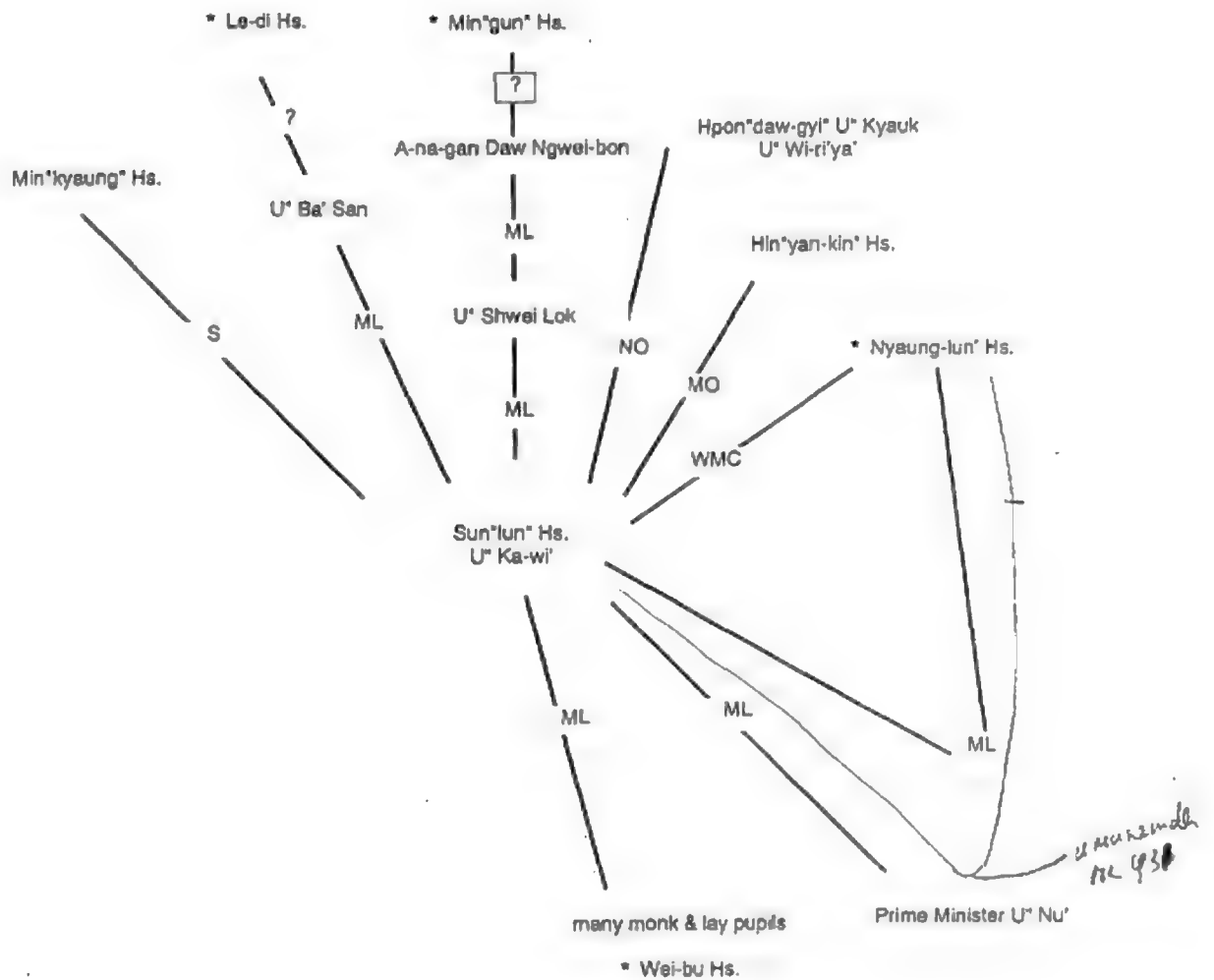


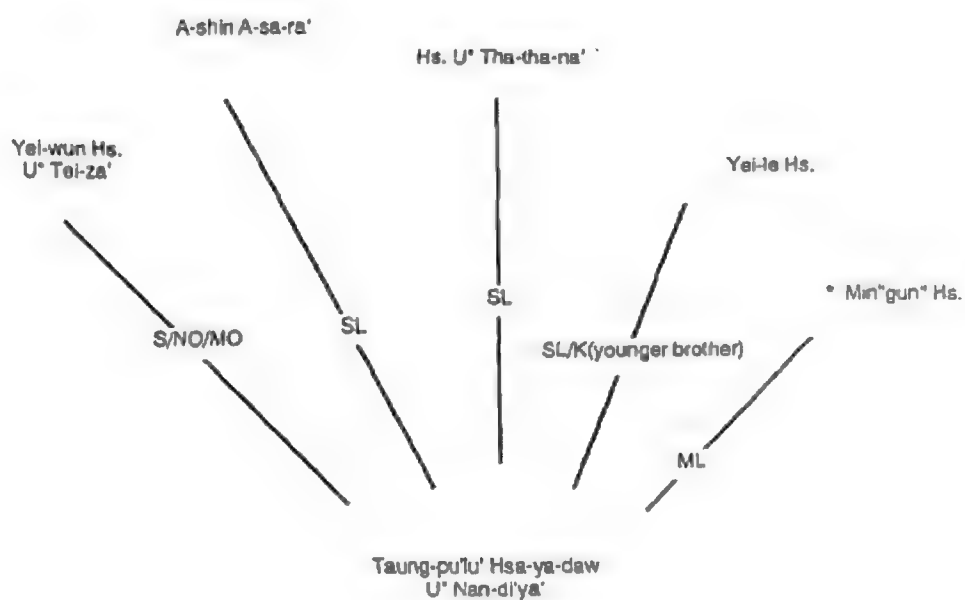
U" Myat Kyaw
(formerly U" Pan-di'da-ma')

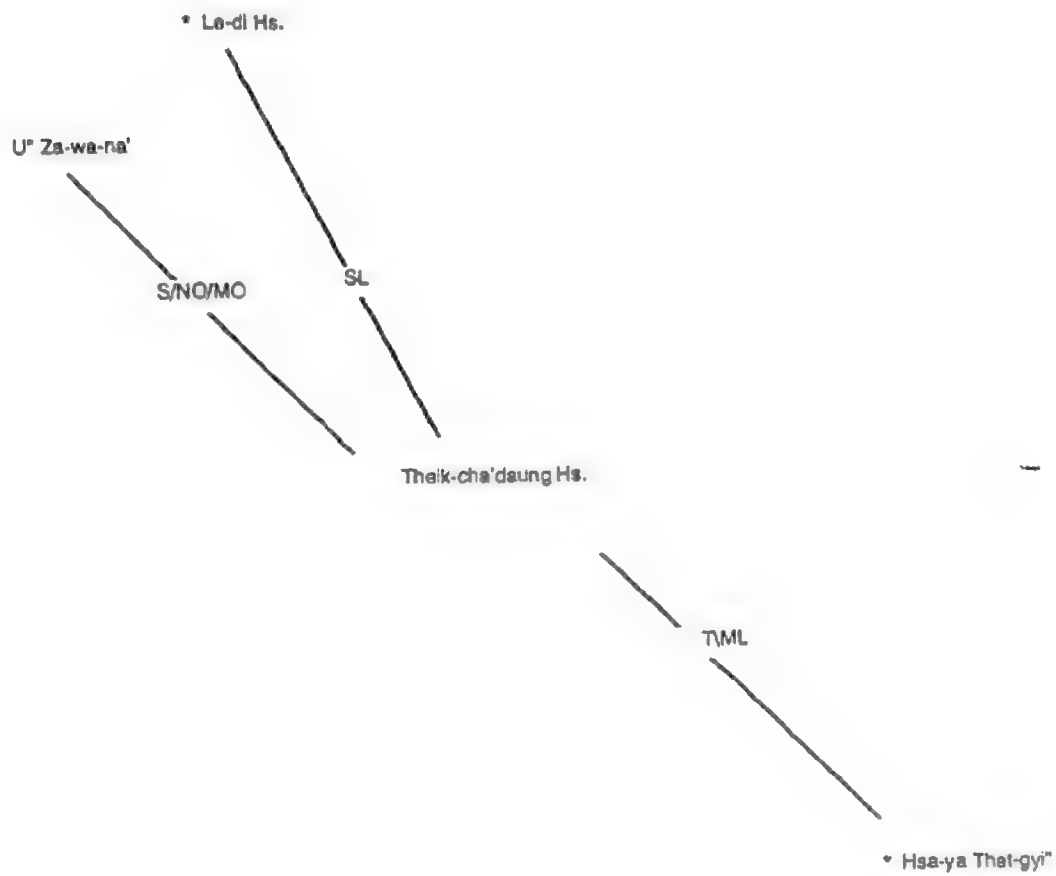


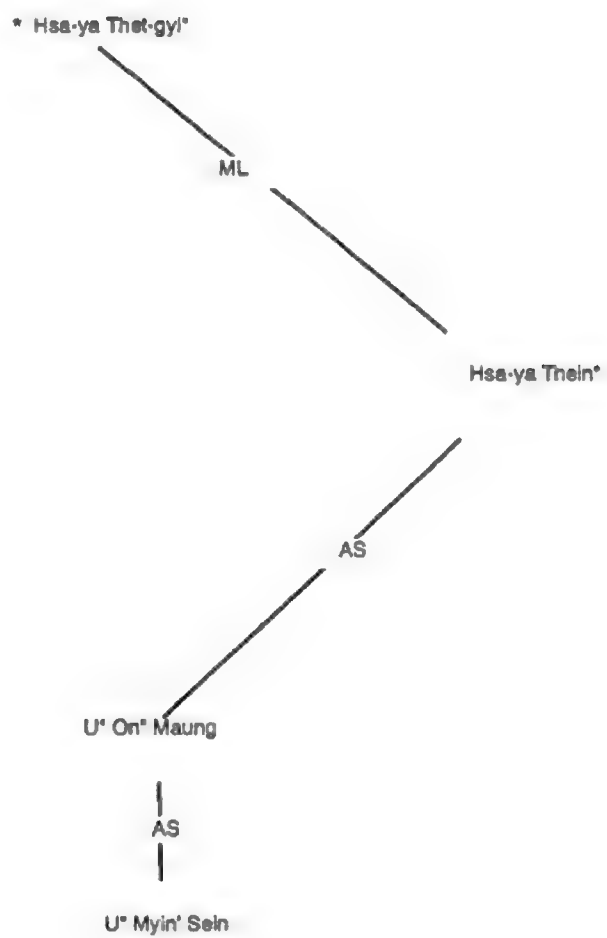


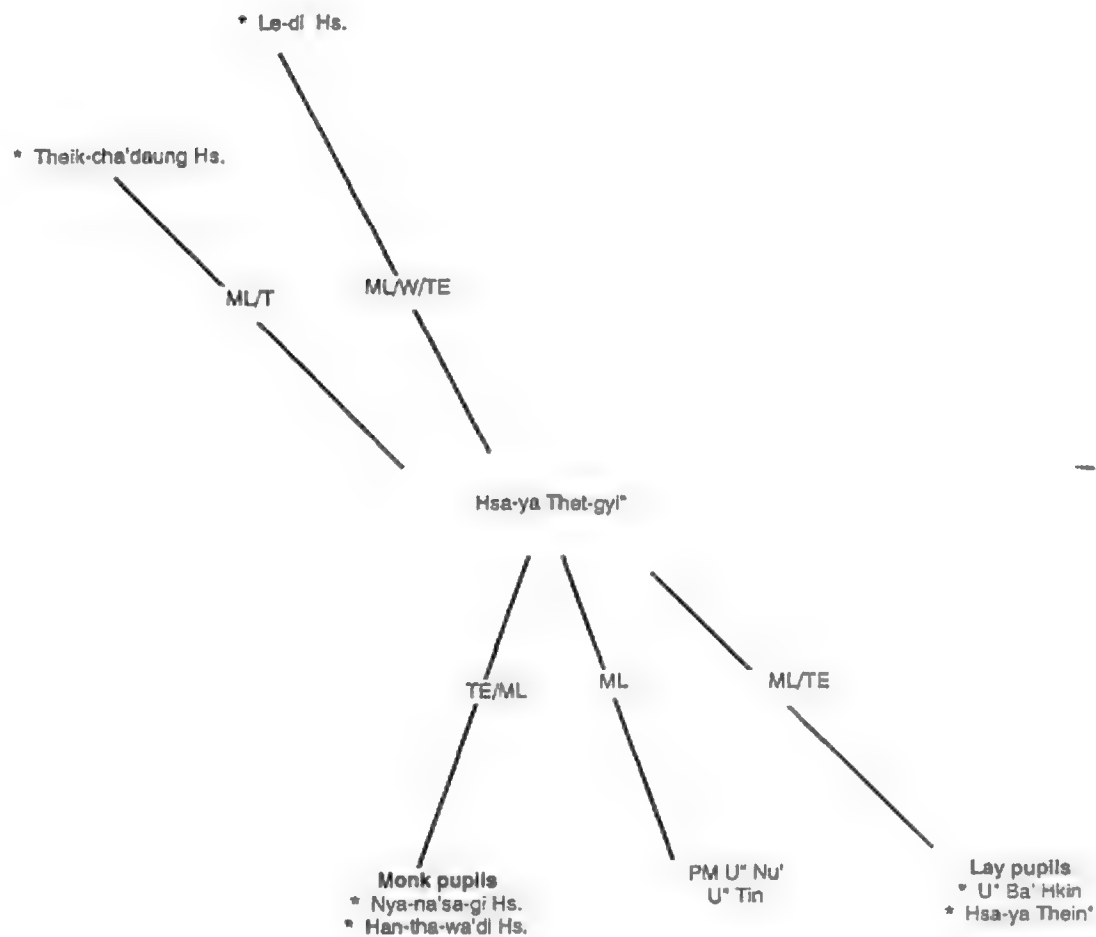


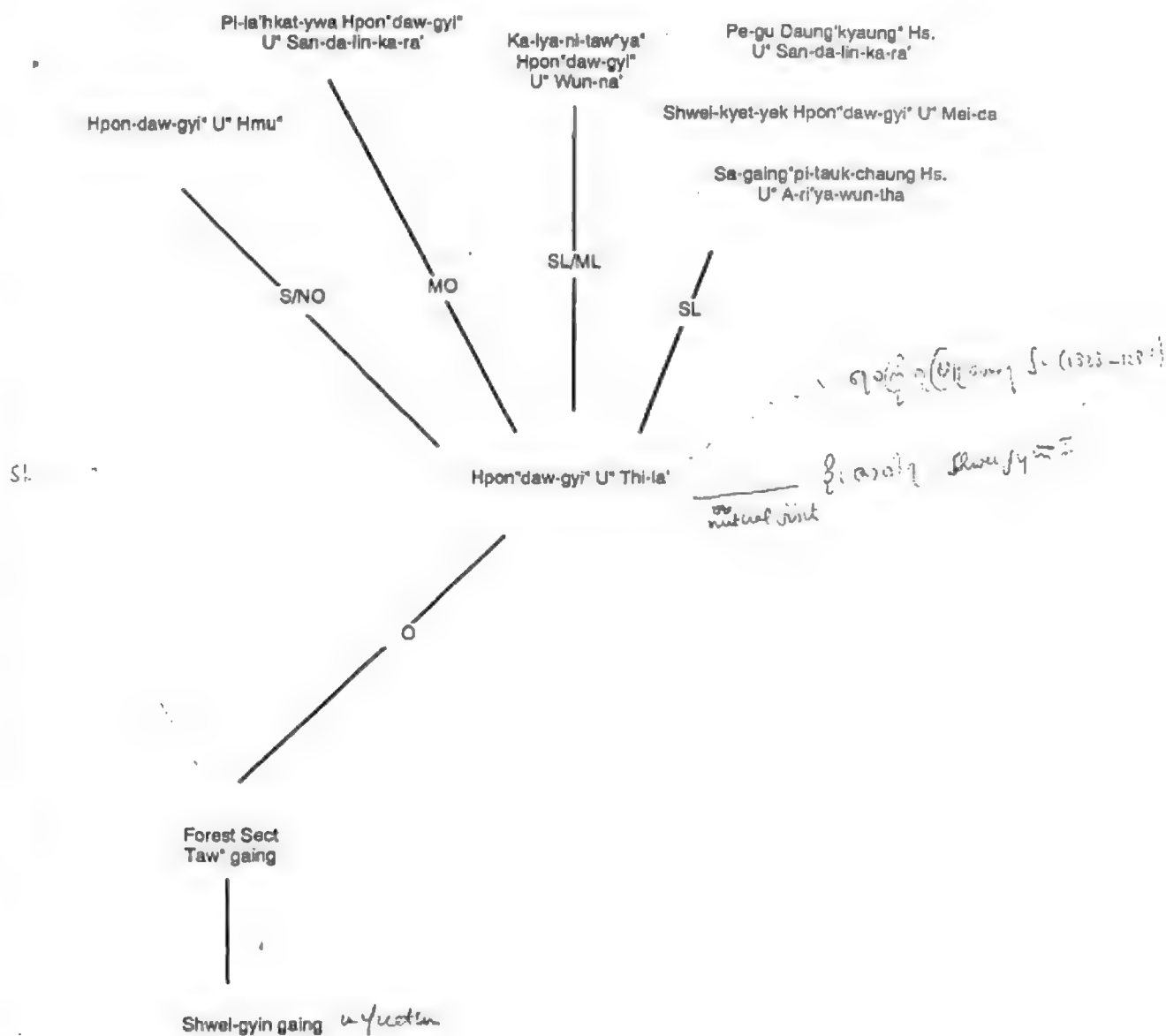


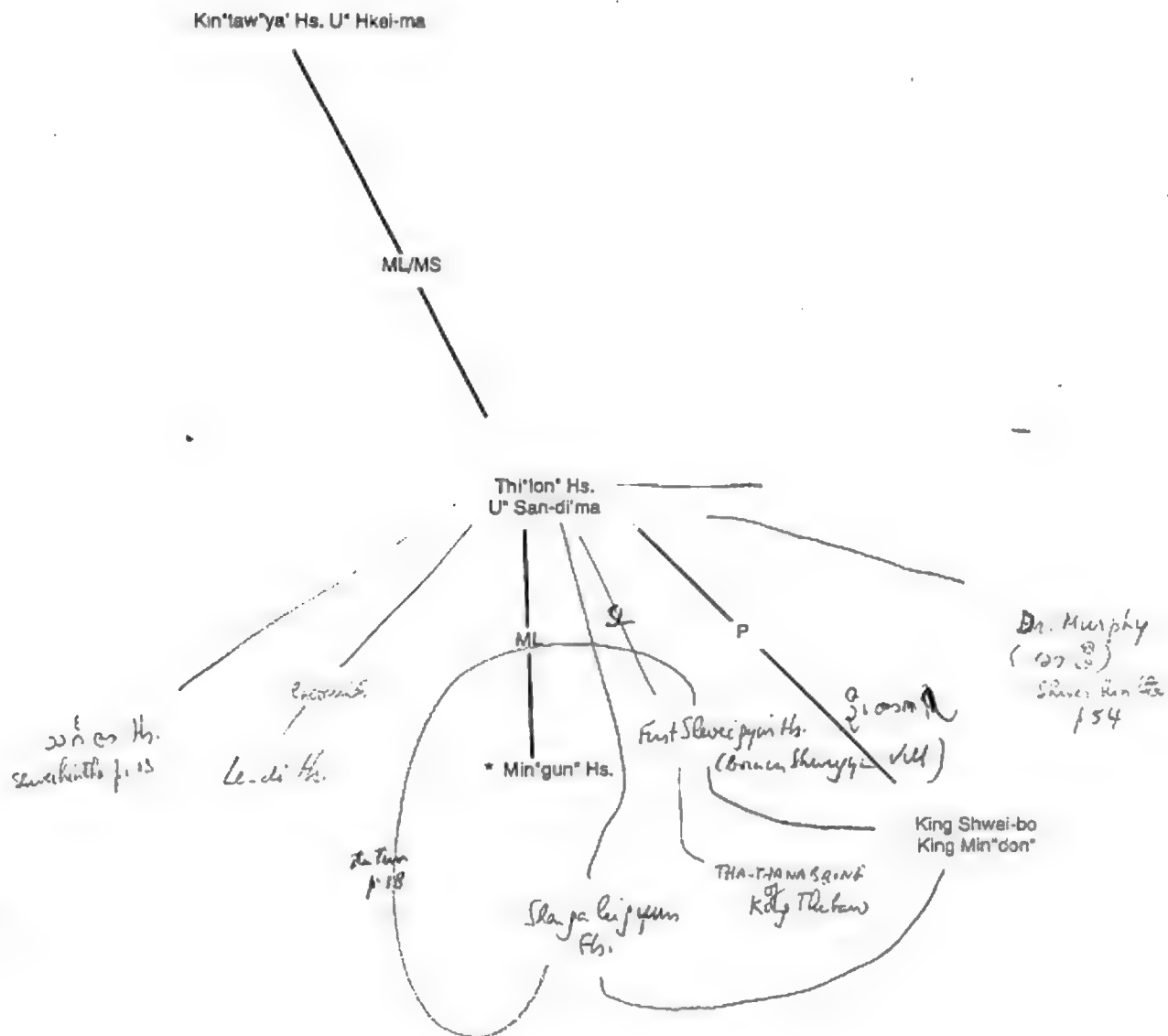


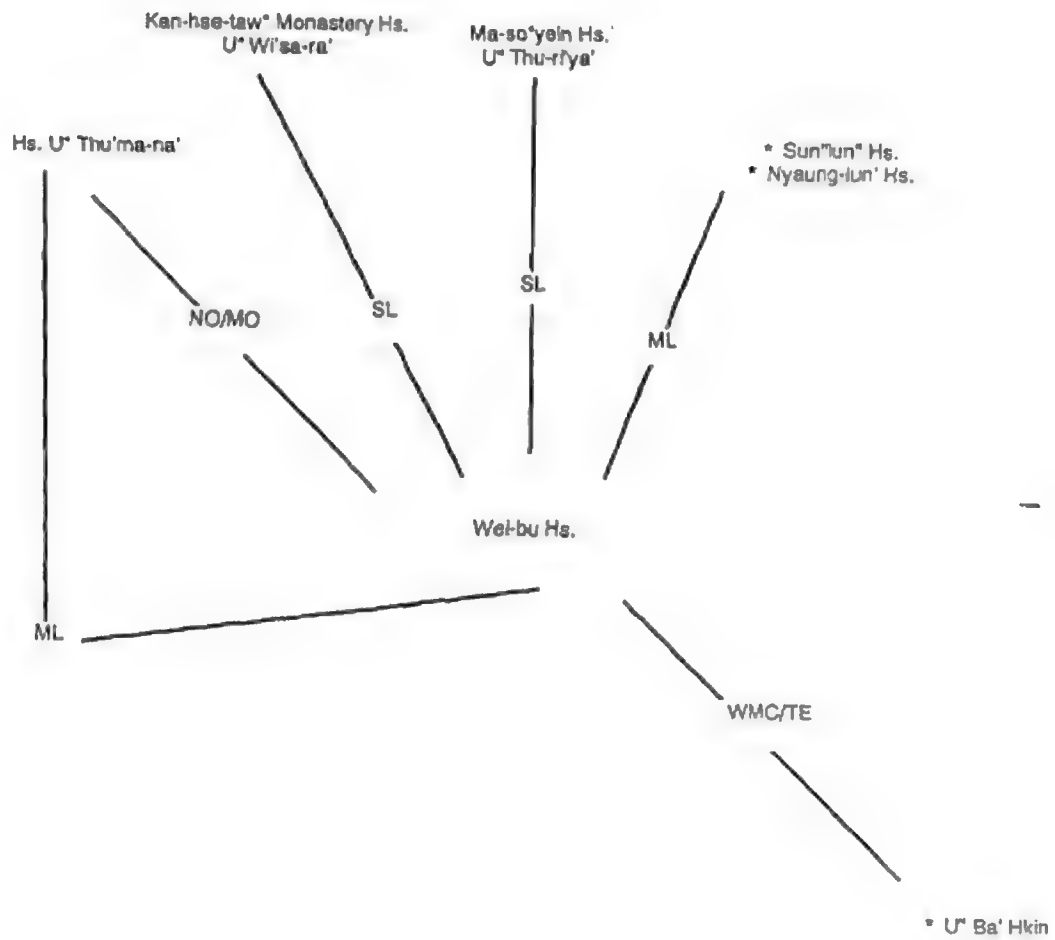












Appendix D.

Sect affiliation monastic Buddhist practice teachers

With the exception of the smaller (and often stricter) sects, biographies do not normally state whether a particular monk was ordained by a member of a certain sect. Since sectarianism does not have a high public profile except among monks who do not consider themselves part of the majority Thu'da-ma', one can safely assume that unless the sect is specifically mentioned in some context, the monk in question is a Thu'da-ma' monk.

Name	Sect
Han-tha-wa'di Hsa-ya-daw	Shwei-gyin
Hkan-di" Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Hngat-dwin" Hsa-ya-daw	Shwei-gyin
Htut-hkaung Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Ka-thit-waing Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Kin"taw"ya' Hsa-ya-daw	?
Kyaung-ban" Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Le-di Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw	Shwei-gyin
Min"gun" Hsa-ya-daw	Shwei-gyin
Mo"kok Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Mo"hnyin" Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Nya-na'sa-gi Hsa-ya-daw	Nya-na' Dwa-ra
Nyaung-lun' Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma(?)
Shwei-gyin Hsa-ya-daw	Shwei-gyin
Sun"lun" Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Taung-pu-lu' Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Theik-cha'daung U" Ti'law"ka'	Thu'da-ma
The"in"gu Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma
Thi"lon" Hsa-ya-daw	Taw" and later Shwei-gyin
Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw	Thu'da-ma

Appendix E.

Rules for the yogis

The following rules should be strictly observed by the Yogis Bikkhus or Lay Disciples (of whatever nationality) practising Satipatthana Meditation at Mahasi Thathana Yeiktha.

1. All Yogis should observe the rules of the SILA (Patimokkha for the Bhikkhus).
2. Without the prior permission of the Nayaka Sayadaw or the Kammatthanacariya, no Yogis should leave the confines of the Yeiktha to pay visits or go out shopping, or for any other purpose.
3. Yogis should practise meditation within the confines of the rooms allotted to them by the Warden. Walking exercise should be made in the passage or corridor reserved for the purpose.
4. Yogi's room should be kept clean and this applies to the bed-room, bath-room, toilet, etc, after use.
5. TALKING is expressly forbidden.
6. If unavoidably necessary, the Yogi could talk in a whisper taking every care not to disturb others. If conversation has to be carried on for any length of time, it should be done outside away from the rooms.
7. Unless expressly permitted by the Nayaka Sayadaw or the Kammatthanacariya, visitors, on any account, are not to be invited to their rooms by the Yogis. If unavoidably necessary, prior permission must be sought to meet visitors outside the building.
8. Reading, Writing of any matter or description, and Reciting (of any religious works) and dealing in Correspondence is entirely prohibited. The use of Telephone is not ordinarily permitted. If essentially required, prior permission should be obtained from the Kammatthanacariya.
9. The Yogi must present themselves for daily examination at the hour appointed by the Kammatthanacariya.
10. The hours between 12 noon and 3 a.m. (Burma Standard Time) are considered the most important and every care must be taken NOT to make any unnecessary noise or to indulge

in conversation, and to create any kind of disturbance whether in one own's interest or for any other's interest.

11. In no circumstances, should the Yogis use the passage or the corridor reserved for walking, for any other purpose such as talking or meeting other Yogis. Visit of one Yogi to another's room should be avoided.
12. It is the responsibility of the Yogis to avoid wastage of electrical energy. Lights should be switched off when not in use. This also applies to the Hall light which must be switched off whenever it is not required.
13. Any breach of the Rules should be reported to the Kammatthacariya.
14. In any other matter not covered by these Rules, advice should be sought from the Kammatthanacariya concerned.

December 20, 1960.

Mahasi Sayadaw

Appendix F.

Monk hagiography in Burmese biographical literature

In chapter 7 two hagiographies have been summarised from which three major themes have been drawn. Here I wish to understand the place of monk hagiography in the context of Burmese biography as a whole, for which there is no place in chapter 7. The principal sources for this discussion are the published proceeds of the Rangoon July 1971 conference on Burmese biography,¹ and Professor Hla Pe's articles on Burmese literature.²

What are the understandings of 'biography' in contemporary Burma?

Biographies have been almost completely absent in early Burmese literary history. As for part-biographical works such as the ruling by Hkon-daw Maung Kya'ban", the *A-yu-daw Min-ga-la* petition,... these were not complete biographies. Biographies came with modern Burmese literature among such works as *Pi-mo "nin" i Pi-mo "nin"*, which records experiences in Oxford University. (article on *At-htok-pat-ti'* in *MSK* vol 15:353-4).

This denies traditional biography of kings and monks a place amongst the biography as a contemporary genre. This requires explanation.

- 1 The conference, entitled *Biographical literature (At-htok-pat-ti' sa-bei)*, was convened by Sa-bel Beik-man, Rangoon, between 20-24 July 1971, as one in a series of seminars on Burmese literature (*Sa-bei hni "hnaw" hpa-hle-bwe"*) which began in 1966. Five authors of biography presented five essays: (Pa-ra-gu U") Hla' Kyaing on 'The history of Burmese biography' (*Myan-ma at-htok-pat-ti' tha-maing"*); (U") Than" Htut on 'Foreign propositions pertaining to biography' (*at-htok-pat-ti' hsaing-ya naing-gan-gya" a-hso-a-myin'mya"*); (U") Htin Hpat (also known as Maung Htin) on 'Experiences in writing biography' (*at-htok-pat-ti' hsaing-ya a-twei'a-kyon-mya"*); (U") Thein" Hpei Myin' on 'Fictional biography' (*Wut-htu'han at-htok-pat-ti'*); (U") Yan Aung on 'Autobiography' (*ko-yei" at-htok-pat-ti'*). These were published with the addition of the address by Lieutenant Colonel Tin Htun", the Secretary to the Ministry of Information, entitled 'Please write biographies in the history of literature which are of a high standard' (*a-hsin'a-tan" myin' thi' gan-da'win at-htok-pat-ti'mya" yei"gya'ba*). The conference was attended by 73 discussants (p172).
- 2 Consulted is the article by Professor Hla' Pe (n.d.) entitled 'Burmese literature' (typescript; it was submitted to *Lettatura d'Oriente*).

There are two main ways of looking at contemporary Burmese literature as a whole. First, one can emphasise radical change, and see in modern literature—the modern biography, the modern novel, and the modern short story—discontinuity with earlier forms of literature. This approach often goes together with a retrospective denial of the existence of an early Burmese equivalent genre. There has been mention of firm dates as to the ‘first’ appearance of the novel in 1904³ and the ‘first’ short story in 1917.⁴ This view is frequently found together with the assumption that foreign ideas and foreign technology⁵ have exercised a decisive influence on Burmese thought during the colonial era. This approach has been adopted by many looking into the history of Burmese literature. Second, instead of drawing such strict discontinuities, one can see the short story, the novel, and the biography, as arising from other genres and as subject to a process of change over time. This may involve sharing continuity between what would from our point of view appear very different genres. The short story is known in Burmese by the same Burmese term we translated as ‘novel’, namely ‘subject, story, account’ (*wut-htu*), with the addition of ‘short’ (*wut-htu’ do*), and the same term was traditionally also used for episodes from the Buddhist scriptures, and later for romantic tales of royalty and court life, long before modern Burmese novelists appeared who saw it as ‘fictitious prose narrative with characters or actions representing everyday life’ (Allott 1982:126). So to say that the novel first appeared in 1904 is deceptive, for we do not know of the *Burmese* novel; all we know is what happened to the novel in Burma from our point of view.

Most studies of contemporary Burmese literature, both western and Burmese, have hitherto adopted the retrospective discontinuity-classificationary approach, and have used predominantly modern western literary criteria to judge the relevance of old genres of Burmese literature. The result is the quote on biography from the Burmese Encyclopaedia, which denies the existence of ‘biography proper’ prior to the 20th century despite considerable evidence to the contrary, particularly in the field of Buddhist hagiography. The 1971 biography conference borrowed at least three of its five themes directly from western literary classification, namely ‘western biography’, ‘fictional biography’, and ‘autobiography’. The fourth essay, namely on the history of Burmese biography, adopted a typically western mode of analysing Burmese

3 The earliest modern Burmese novel is considered to be James Hla Gyaw’s (1866–1920) *Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma*, an adaptation of part of ‘The Count of Monte Cristo’ (Hla Pe n.d.:35).

4 The first modern short story has been noted as ‘The Story of Master T.T. and Miss T.S.’ (*Maung Thein” Tin Ma’ Thein” Shin wut-htu*) in *Thu-ri’ya*. (Min” Kyaw Wut-htu’do’ a-lat pyin-nya. Rangoon Sa-bei Beik-man Seminar paper (1978:15) referred to in Anna Allot (1982).

5 Not only was the ‘earliest’ novel a translation from a foreign work, but many novels dealt with contemporary conflicts between the ways of the Burmese and those of the foreigner. The modern short story was dependent on the modern newspaper and magazine for its popularisation. Groups shaping these modern modes of Burmese writing included *Hkū-san”* ‘Modern Age’, a group of intellectuals of the 1930s who wrote in a colloquial as opposed to the traditional literary style, the Burma Research Society, and the Burma Education Extension Association.

biography and drew extensively on analogies between the history of Burmese and English biography (further details below).

Hla' Kyaing (1971), whose article in the proceedings of the 1971 conference dealt with the history of Burmese biography, expounded the following view: 'In Burmese literature the types of writing which take as subject the lives of individual persons are termed *at-htok-pat-ti*' or *at-htok-pat...* texts which recount the life and deeds of a single individual...a genre of literature...' (Hla' Kyaing 1971:1).

He classified different types of biography according to methodology of authorship: i) 'normal biographies' (*yo" yo" at-htok-pat-ti*'), written about episodes in someone else's life; ii) 'autobiographies' (*ko-yei" at-htok-pat-ti*') by oneself about oneself; iii) 'fictional biographies' (*wut-htu" tha-baw" pa thaw at-htok-pat-ti*); iv) 'biographies which are records' (*hmat-tan" tha-baw" ba thaw" at-htok-pat-ti*'), where writers record interesting events from a personal perspective (Hla' Kyaing 1971:2).

Such a vision of Burmese biography, I would argue, relies on applying largely western criteria alien to a large proportion of Burmese literature still produced today, including hagiography. What are these western criteria?

'In this modern era more importance should be given to the biographies of farmers and or workers' (Hla' Kyaing 1971:38). The brief of the conference was to foster 'modern' and 'good' biographies, not to analyse a variety of Burmese biographical styles for the sake of understanding only. Good biographies, according to the proceeds of the 1971 conference, were biographies of ordinary peasants and contemporary heroes⁶; those of monks and royalty are largely irrelevant curiosities which have not proved adaptable to the modern era.

According to these 'secular-rational' criteria, Burmese hagiography ranks particularly low. *At-htok-pat-ti' htu"* (1907 AD), about the lives Ba"me' Hsa-ya-daw and eleven other monks, and one of earliest Burmese biographies in print, provided an example of 'outdated' biography: the mode of writing was found to be 'ancient in style', and 'legendary' with events inserted which are 'in conflict with reality' (Hla' Kyaing 1971:11). Indeed, monk hagiographies are characteristically observed to be behind the times since they do not participate in progress. As viewed by one contributor,

As for the lack of progress in the manner of writing 'monk biography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti*'), this is so because the monks who write biographies turn their faces away from contemporary writings. Also, they do not want their manner of writing associated with the biographical styles of worldly people. Furthermore, they do not want their biographies to float away unsalvaged in the flood of worldly biographies, which are more progressive and responsive to change (Hla' Kyaing 1971:10-11).

So, while the conference recognised the enormous contribution of royal but in particular monk biographies to Burmese biographical literature, these were considered to be 'inferior' to 'modern' biography;

While we find other biographical types have changed, we do not find progress in the quality of 'monk biographies' (*hte-rok-pat-ti*). The manner in which 'monk biographies' are written varies: they have been written in Pali, in a mixture of Pali and Burmese, or in Burmese prose overlaid with rhyme. Writings about the worldly events pertaining to the subject as a 'human' (i.e. unordained) are few, while writings exclusively about the otherworldly qualities of the biographical subject are many. Because of the urge to exalt the excellence of the biographical subject, and the excessive faith, the view of reality in some monk biographies is fable-like. While there is naturally always bad and good in human life, the bad is drowned and only the good tends to be recounted. In monk biographies, there is little real biography (*at-htok-pat-ti*), but much exaltation. There is an excessive singing of praises (Hla' Kyaing 1971:10-11).

Having looked in detail at two hagiographies in chapter 7, here I seek to present an alternative, but no less valid, way of looking at Burmese hagiography, which has been much ignored in 'official' Burmese scholarship. It is also hoped that it may provide a comparative dimension to western ideas about biography.

History of Burmese biography: from hagiographical 'legend' to biographical 'fact'

It may be deduced from this emotive critique of monk hagiography that modern biographers have a problem with Burmese biography, which was so dominated by a hagiographical tradition which evolved from the stories about the Buddha's life⁷ and its incarnations.⁸ Parallel to this,

7 The subject of the Buddha's last life has been specifically addressed by many Burmese authors. We find accounts of the life of the Buddha having been written as early as the second part of the 16th century, with *Bok-dok-pat-ti-pyo* by (Shin) Thi-la-wun-tha' (Hla'tha-mein 1961:4). (U") Htun' Hlaing in his foreword to *Mu'nein-da* (1982) does not identify the above, but identifies nine of the best known major biographies, including: 1. *Ta-hta-ga-ta' u'da-na di-pa-ni* by the Thi-ri'that-da-ma-bi'lin-ka-ra' Hsa-ya-daw (1781); 2. *Ma-la-lin-ka-ra'* (1798), written by the Second Me'hti' Hsa-ya-daw (1747-1834) (translated into English in 1858 by Rev R Bigandet, Bishop of Ramatha and Vicar Apostolic of Ava and Pegu); 3. *Zei-nat-hta'pa-ka-tha-ni* (n.d. but betw. 1817-1894) written by Kyi'the'lei'dat Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' (1817-1894); 4. *Zam-bu'meik-hswei Ma-ha-bok-da-win* (n.d.) by (A-shin) That-da-ma'zaw'ta' & (A-shin) Tha-ra'da'thi; 5. *Mu-la'bok-da-win wut-htu'kyan* (1898) (n.a.); 6. *Hku'hit-nei' Bok-da-win-hpa-ya'shi'iko* (n.d.) by the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw; 7. *Thu'da-ma'wa-di Bok-da-win wut-htu'* (n.a., n.d.); 8. *Yok-son Bok-da' tha-tha-na-win* (1951) by (Taung-myo' Ma'ha-gan-da-yon Hsa-ya-daw A-shin) Za-na-ka'bi'wun-tha'; 9. *Ma'ha-bok-da-win* by (Ti'pi'ta-ka' Hsa-ya-daw U") Wi'seit-ta'tha-ra'. Biography number 1 is condemned for its 'worldliness' (incorporating from Ma-ha-yan and dealing with astrology) and its lack of regard for Pali Theravada sources on 3 accounts: it includes the Wa'thon-dyel 'Ma-ha-yan' episode; it includes the episode where the Buddha showed his powers to King Zam-bok-pa-di'; it explains the Ten Determinations of Planetary Constellations (*Nek-hkat-ta'pa-reik-hsei-da'*) instead of the conventional Eight. The latter is described as, with 8 thick books, the largest and most complete.

8 There are too many Burmese reworkings of the Buddha's rebirth stories (*zat*) to mention. The *zat* were already popular subjects in the mural paintings of the early Pagan period at the beginning of the 11th century. Among the earliest written *zat* are the many adapted into *pyo* poems and embellished with extended verses by (Shin) Thi-la-wun-tha' (1453-1518) and by (Shin) Ra'hta'tha-ra' (1468-1530) (Hla Pe n.d.:10-12). (Da-gon U") Htun' Myin' (1974:38) held the opinion that these were the earliest known writers of *zat*, and in addition (pp39-40) lists another 50 names or so of monks writing *zat* since.

stories evolved from early Burmese history about the lives of various Buddhist saints which were probably orally transmitted in the form of songs and prayers (such as Shin U'pa-gok) and spirits (such as Tha-gya" Min"),⁹ as well as of various supernatural beings such as *bo" daw* and *weik-za*.¹⁰

Such 'canonical' and 'oral' types of biography on the ancients continued to be of significance throughout Burmese literature (e.g. the famous 14th and 15th century Burmese *pyo'* poems, which had the incarnations of the Buddha as their theme), but biographies of Burmese personalities date from much later. Though these may, as pointed out by Hla' Kyaing (1971:2-3), be said to have begun 'around the time Burmese literature began' with the 1112 AD Mya' Zei-di inscription in Pagan, proper examples of such literature are evident somewhat later. Hla' Kyaing (1971:3-4) was referring to the very early inscriptions which include episodic details, for example, on the lives of the kings Ya-za'kon-ma and Kyan-zit-tha", and which served as permanent records of acts of charity by royalty and officials to monasteries and pagodas. These include elaborate reference to the donations and evoke prayers and curses, but they reveal only episodic information about the identity of the donors. But the subjects of the earliest surviving biographical materials from the 12th century onwards until the 19th century were by and large kings and monks (Hla' Kyaing 1971:4).

The earliest biographies were inscribed on stone, including the earliest 'complete' monk

- 9 For example, the 'biographies' of the various spirits put by King A-naw-ra'hta in the Shwei-zi'gon Pagoda in 1059, when he is alleged to have said: 'Men will not come for the sake of the new faith. Let them come for their old gods and gradually they will be won over' (Harvey 1925:33). The life-histories of these spirits were clearly well-known at the time and must have been the subject of folk songs, prayers, and/or written material in those days. Today there are many works dedicated to explaining the lives of these spirits, many of which were historical figures. These too sometimes use the term 'biography'. For example in (Hsa-ya U") Kan Min" (1949:33) writes of 'the biographies of the 37 named nats...' (37 min"nat a-myo"a-mi at-htok-pat-ti"...).
- 10 Biographies of *bo" daw* and *weik-za* are conveyed in a rather secretive manner through the lineage of the sects founded around them. Though there are still several contemporary examples of such biographies about, their publication is suppressed by government censors.

biography, namely that of Ma-ha-ek-ga' Pan-di'ta from 1174 AD (Hla' Kyaing 1971:4), and the earliest known royal biography, namely that of King Da-ma'zei-di', inscribed in 1479 on 10 stone slabs in Pali and Mon near the Ka-lya-ni ordination hall in Pegu. The tradition of inscribing biographies on stone continues today (Hla' Kyaing 1971:5).¹¹

With the expansion of literature in the course of the 14th and 15th centuries, much biographical information came to be conveyed in stylised literary genres, mostly composed in verse (*ga-bya*), often by monks and courtiers specifically for the ear of royalty. 'Records' (*maw-gun*) took notable events in the king's life as their theme.¹² Eulogies (*ei"gyin*) were 'forms of address to a royal child' which told 'the child of the great achievements of his or her royal ancestors, tracing the line back as far as the semi-divine beings who were accepted as the progenitors of the family'.¹³ Verse biographies were also commonly composed about members of royalty on the occasion of important life cycle ceremonies.¹⁴ 'Historical accounts of a campaign' (*a-yei"daw-bon*) pivot around the exploits of a member of royalty, of which five are known dated between the mid 16th to the late 18th centuries.¹⁵ From the 16th century onwards, biographical episodes of monks and kings in interaction with each other were recorded in the secular (*ya-za win*)¹⁶ and religious chronicles (*tha-tha-na win*).¹⁷

The introduction of the printing press in the 20th century marks a significant increase in the

- 11 Later examples of biographical inscriptions are, according to Sa-bei Beik-man (1971:5-6): of (Tha-tha-na-baing Hsa-ya-daw) Hkin Gyi" Hpyaw (1766) in Sa-gaing" (during Hsin-byu-shin's reign); of the The"in" Tha-tha-na-baing Hsa-ya-daw (1840), east of Mandalay; and of the (Tha-tha-na-baing Hsa-ya-daw U") Nyei-ya' (1865), Mandalay. There are some notable examples of lay biographical inscription towards the end 19th-beginning 20th century: of (Maing" Hkaing" Myo'sa" U") Yan (1892), west of Mandalay; and of (Yaw" Min'gyi" U") Hpo" Hlaing (1884).
- 12 An example of an early *maw-gun* with biographical content is Pye-son (1472), on a king's voyage down the Irrawaddy, written by (Shin) Htwei" Nyo (see Hla Pe n.d.:13).
- 13 An example of an early *ei"gyin* is Tha-hkin Htwei Ei"gyin" (1476) by (Shin) Thu-ye" (see Hla Pe n.d.:14).
- 14 For example, the Head of 3,000 Barges (Hlaw-ga" Thon"daung-hmu") composed, on the occasion of the ascension to the throne by Ta-bin-shwei-hti" in Taungoo in 1531, *Shwei-na" daw-thwin*", also an *ei"gyin*" (Sa-bei Beik-man 1971:7).
- 15 *A-yei"daw-bon* is translated in Stewart & Dunn (Pt V, p319) as 'affair, cause, campaign, struggle, revolution; fortune, prospects, position; historical account of a campaign or struggle for power or a cause'. Five famous *a-yei"daw-bon* are known. The Burmese Encyclopaedia (MSK vols 5:348; 11:72; 4:236, 380; 14:277): Da-nya'wa-di A., Ya-za-di'ra A., Hsin-byu-shin A., Nyaung-yan"min'ta-ya" A., and A-laung"min'ta-ya"gyi" A.
- 16 Biographical data is to be found in the following *ya-za win*: '1. 'Celebrated Chronicle' (*Ya-za-win-gyaw*, 1520) by (Shin) Thi-la' wun-tha'—an adaptation of the Ceylonese Mahavamsa with added information on the kings of Burma; 2. 'Great Chronicle' *Ma-ha-ya-za-win-gyi*" (1714-33), by (U") Ka-la"—with the major part of history devoted to Burmese history up until 1728; 3. 'Glass Palace Chronicle' *Hman-nan" ma-ha-ya-za-win-daw-gyi*" (1819-37), by a committee of scholars at the command of King Ba'gyi"daw; updated by King Min"don" up to the year 1854 and by (U") Tin until 1886.
- 17 See chapter 3 for a list of the *tha-tha-na win*.

sheer quantity of biographies in circulation: the *Burma Gazette* reveals that during the 17-year period between 1868-1885 only five biographies were published.¹⁸ Yet the 10 year period between 1961-70 yielded no less than 268 biographies, or 309 if personal records such as diaries are counted.¹⁹

The 20th century marked a completely new era in Burmese biography. First, until the 20th century the laity and the commoner were rarely, if ever, subject to biographical description,²⁰ but in the course of the 20th century these became worthy biographical subjects.

When Burmese biography, which had limited itself to principalities and monks, got into the 20th century, it scattered into pieces. Biographies got to be written about many people other than kings and monks. Politicians were written about, intellectuals were written about ... with these the realms of biographical subject-matter was expanded, and biography progressed as did Burmese literature (Hla' Kyaing 1971:11-12).²¹

Second, the participants of the 1971 biography conference distinguished between the evolution of different styles of biographical description. For example, autobiography—though having its precedent in Pali literature and in colophons to old Burmese writings—²² is described as having taken on a distinctive form during the colonial era. Fictional biography is described as having evolved into a separate biographical style, with *Da-ma'zei-di Min" at-htok-pat-ti"* by Mr. Maung Hmaing" being one of the earliest, written sometime between 1915-16 (2nd edn 1923).²³ The historical autobiographical record is described as having evolved as a style about a century ago,

18 Three of these were in Burmese: of which one dealt with the life of Christ, and two with the life of the Buddha (namely *Zei-nat-hta'pa-ka-tha-ni* and *Ma-la-lin-ka-ra*).

19 Though about one-third are either published in, or translations from foreign languages, the rest is in Burmese. The 268 works are divided as follows: 10 autobiographies (*ko-yei" at-htok-pat-ti"*) [1 foreign work translated into Burmese, and 9 original Burmese works]; 234 biographies (*at-htok-pat-ti"*) [44 on religion in Burmese, 1 about Burma in a foreign language, 1 translated into Burmese on religion, 107 translated into Burmese on other subjects, 81 on other subjects in Burmese]; 24 fictional biographies (*wut-htu' han at-htok-pat-ti"*) [22 in Burmese, 2 translated into Burmese]; 41 helpful diaries (*a-mya"zon" a-htauk-a-ku pyu'hi ko-yei" hmat-dan"*) (Sa-bei Beik-man 1971:22).

20 There are, of course, brief biographical sketches found of laity here and there. The *taw"la"* and the *ya-du'* were early descriptions of episodes in the lives of courtiers and laity (Hla Pe n.d.:15). Also, biographical data of chief ministers are included in the *Law"ka byu-ha-kyan"* (written in the 1750s), an account of the Toungoo court procedure.

21 See end-notes, 'biographies, new'.

22 Autobiographies were included in the Buddhist scriptures in the form of *Htei-ra-pa'dan hnin' htei-ri a-pa'dan* in *Hku'da-las' ni'ke* in which the Buddha's pupils recounted their lives. Autobiographical information is also found in early Burmese literature, for example in the colophons to works such as *Ko'gan"pyo"* by Shin Ma-ha Ra'hta'tha-ra'.

But the earliest-known dedicated autobiography in Burmese literary history is *A-deik-sa'wun-tha' htei-ra-pa'dan*, written in 1927 by the monk Shin A-deik-sa'wun-tha' on his life during his stay in England in the *Britain Burma Magazine* nos 1-8. In this he used the Pali *Htei-ra-pa'dan hnin' htei-ri a-pa'dan* above as example. He wrote in a final chapter of the book openly on his leaving the monkhood. The result was that his pupils wanted to burn it.

This was followed 13 years later by *Pi-mo'nin" i Pi-mo'nin"*, the autobiography of Pi-mo'nin". Other autobiographies include: *Da-gon-ta-ya i Da-gon-ta-ya* (1951), the autobiography of Da-gon-ta-ya; *Ma-ha-hswei i Ma-ha-hswei*, autobiography of Ma-ha-hswei; *Shwei-u'daung" i ta-thek-ta hmat-tan"*, the autobiography of Shwei-u'daung. For other autobiographical examples see Sa-bei Beik-man (1971:19-25,105-125).

23 Other renowned fictional biographies are: *Hsa-ya Lun" at-htok-pat-ti"* by (Tet Hpon"gyi") Thein" Hpei, and *Shwei-man"lin Maung* by (U") Thaw Zin.

with the records of the travels by Minister Kin-wun Min²⁴ gyi" (1821-1908) in the UK and France.²⁴ Of course, traditional Buddhist 'canonical' biography also saw some remarkable innovations, such as the eight volume *Ma-ha-bok-da'win*, the longest Buddha biography ever in Burma, written by the (Ti'pi'ta-ka' Hsa-ya-daw U") Wi'seik-ta'tha-ra' at the request of (U") Nu' in 1955. Also, the Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw rewrote the biography of Bok-da'gaw²⁵ tha' in response to what he perceived to be a smear campaign by foreigners.²⁵ These biographical innovations went hand in hand with the increasing use of Burmese as the medium of description instead of Pali or *neik-tha-ya'*, and prose instead of verse.

The two biographies dealt with in chapter 7 were part of a global trend in Burmese literature: from verse to prose, from Pali and *neik-tha-ya'* to vernacular, and, in the case of the Ba' Hkin biography, from monk to layman as subject. They are two examples of a series of at least twenty of such renowned biographies in the 'tradition of practice' (see Ch.2). Unfortunately the 1971 biography conference proceedings, in emphasising progress, readily dismissed contemporary monk biography as backward so that we know little about the language and style of monk hagiography. The question is: in what respect is there a Burmese sense of hagiography apart from the ideal modern Burmese model sketched at the 1971 conference?

Hagiography vs biography: on the centrality of 'subject' versus 'author'

Buddhist hagiography differs from modern biography in fundamental respects.

Above all we are dealing here with a *sacred* and not a *secular* form of biography. But what is 'sacred'? Sacred is putting the subject of the biography first above all other considerations. Some adopt an 'author centred' classification of biography by classifying biographical genres according to the type of author and the methodology used; others classify biography according to the nature of its subject. I would argue that the classification adopted in the 1971 conference on biography was author-oriented with an emphasis on chronology and methodology, which is quite different from the classificatory criteria inherent in traditional Buddhist hagiography, which revolves around the subject's quality of sacredness and his place in the cosmology.

24 Another example of such 'record' type biographies is: *Oxford University hmat-dan*", by Theik-pan Maung-wa'. After the war: *Kyu-nok i sun'sa "gan"* by (Tha-hkin) Htun' Ok, *Sit-a-dwin" hka-yi* "the by Thein" Hpei Myin', and numerous others (Sa-bei Beik-man 1971:32-34).

25 See Thi-la-nan-da (1982:121-130).

There are three main terms for biography in the Burmese language—*at-htok-pat-ti'*, *htei-rok-pat-ti'*, and *a-pa'dan*. *At-htok-pat-ti'* (apart from its modern use as a generic term for all biography) specifically refers to the biography of a lay person (i.e. non-monk), whereas *htei-rok-pat-ti'* (derived from the first meaning 'biography of a *htei-ra'*', i.e. 'monk biography')²⁶ is used to convey that the text deals with a particularly sacred subject. The term 'monk biography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti'*), though clearly conveying the biographical subject as more sacred than the subjects whose biographies are merely 'biography' (*at-htok-pat-ti'*), is felt by some not to be sacred enough in connotation. Those holding this view prefer to use *htei-ra-pa'dan* for its ancient authenticity,²⁷ as it was in use in the Pali canon, because this term conveys the sacredness of the biographical subject even better than 'monk biography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti'*).

Biography here is differentiated according to the categories the biographical subjects belong to, not according to stylistic distinctions of different types of linguistic description adopted by the 1971 conference. For example, it is controversial to use the term 'monk biography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti'*) for biographies with laymen as subject—and on the basis of stringent censorship laws in Burma this would certainly not be allowed—nevertheless the lay meditation teacher Myat Thein²⁸ Htun²⁹ did exactly this for his autobiography. As a layman on the cover he correctly stated that his life story was a lay-biography proper, by using *at-htok-pat-ti'*, but in the book itself he referred to it as a 'monk biography' (*htei-rok-pat-ti'*). Another irregularity was his reference to himself in the caption to his picture at the front of the book by a monk title, (Hsa-ya-daw U³⁰) Myat Thein³¹ Htun³², though he was clearly dressed in lay clothes and used his lay name with it. This theme of lay claims to monkhood by virtue of meditational practice as opposed to ordination has been addressed before, and using a particular term for biography also stakes a claim to its subject's sacredness.

Also the term *htei-ra-pa'dan* was specifically chosen by (U³³) Kaw³⁴ wi³⁵ da³⁶ (1971:xiv), the biographer of the famous monk WM teacher Mo³⁷ hnyin³⁸ Hsa-ya-daw, who first argued that the term was historically prior in use to *htei-rok-pat-ti'*, and then went on to explain why he preferred this term;

Htei-rok-pat-ti' is the customary term. *Htei-ra-pa'dan* is the original term. Really, only *htei-ra-pa'dan* was used at the Buddha's time, and this is the oldest term. Hence, I have followed ancient custom,

26 On the distinction between *at-htok-pat-ti'* and *htei-rok-pat-ti'*, see Myat Thein³⁹ Htun⁴⁰ (1935:2-4). Note that *htei-rok-pat-ti'* is made up of *htei-ra'*, 'elder priest of no less than 10 rainy seasons in priesthood' + *ok-pat-ti'*, 'circumstances, events'. Theravada Buddhism is thus made up of *Htei-ra'* (elder priest) + *wa-da'*, 'views, teachings'. Aw-ba-tha (1975:286) distinguished between several grades of *htei*: 'young elder' (*a-nu'htei*) for monks up to 10 rainy seasons; ? (*myit-zi'ma'htei*) between ten and twenty rainy seasons; 'great elder' (*ma-ha-htei*) for monks over twenty rainy seasons. Judson (1953:529) differs from Aw-ba-tha: he held that *htei* refers to those monk for five rainy seasons, as do *a-nu'htei* and *myit-zi'ma'htei*; *hta-ra'htei* of ten rainy seasons; and *ma-ha-htei* of twenty rainy seasons. Some biographies of WM monks indicate seniority of the monk in the title, as does (Le-di U⁴¹) Wun-ni-ta⁴² of the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw, *The Le-di Hsa-ya-daw Ma-ha-noble-great-abbott's Ma-ha-hagiography*.

27 See end-notes, 'a-pa'dan'

and termed the work *Mo "hnyin" Great Htei-ra-pa'dan*.²⁸

So what are we to make of this? Western literary distinctions have exercised an important influence on contemporary Burmese perceptions of their own literature (Allott 1982:105). These distinctions are themselves very fluid, but what may be suggested is that these criteria have one thing in common: they are intended to ensure the historical and factual authenticity of a work and to 'pin it down'. This is not only a criterion employed by literary critics, but also by historians whose scholarly task it is to separate the real from the unreal. For example, Lieberman (1984:298) has to say about the two campaign histories of the king A-laung'hpa-ya²⁹: 'Both biographies must be treated with considerably greater caution than U Kala's history, for they were designed as eulogies, exaggerating Alaung-hpaya's victories, hiding his reverses, disguising the continued political appeal of the fallen Toungoo house, and assigning an unreasonably early date to his assumption of royal status.'

The conference judged Burmese religious biography retrospectively, finding it to be based on 'ignorance' of the distinction between 'historical fact' and 'legend';³⁰ a distinction which is central to modern western literature and history, and which the conference contributors sought to foster in modern Burmese literature. Furthermore, the three terms in the Burmese traditional classificatory system for biography convey the sacred/unsacred category of beings to which the biographical subject belongs, and not, as the western classification goes, according to the type of author (autobiography/biography—i.e. whether the author is the biographical subject or not), the methods of the author (to determine whether it is 'fictional' or 'scholarly') or the historical authenticity of the text (through corroboration of date and place). This shift is, of course, not unique to the Burmese tradition, but has been a development within western literary tradition as a whole for which Foucault reserved the useful concept of the 'author-function'.³¹

The conference found the purpose of biography to be that it 'generates interest in the reader';

Like other genres, the biography generates interest in the reader. It is also of great benefit. On reading the biography, the reader can get an interest, and then is able to understand facts which may be of immediate benefit to the reader: on understanding the lives and deeds of other people it is possible to dwell on one's own life and deeds. What is unsuitable may be left out'. (p1)

The purpose of 'sacred' biography, on the other hand, is more than just educative. It also includes

28 This argument is also made in Hla' Tha-mein (1961:za'-nya').

29 A-laung'hpa-ya" a-yei" daw-bon, probably written by the ministers of King A-laung'hpa-ya" (1714-1760).

30 Another example is Harvey (1925:xvii): 'When a standard history of Burma comes to be written, it will be necessary to divide the reigns of such kings as Anawrahta into two parts; the first part will be The Evidence, e.g. inscriptions showing him to have actually existed and what he did, and the second part will be The Anawrahta legend.'

31 See also Michel Foucault's (1977), 'What Is an Author'.

the element of worship and reverence. Consider, for example, how the biographer of the Ma-ha-si is complemented on his skills; he kindled a 'burning desire' in the reader by presenting the biographical subject's sacred qualities much like had been described in the U'min-ga' zat³²;

Much the same way, at the present moment too, it was because of the fine achievement of Ashin Silanandabhivamsa [A-shin Thi-la-nan-da] in being able to extol the attributes of the Hsa-ya-daw-gyi³³, that many people were found to have been kindled with the burning desire to re-read the Dhamma Texts written by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. If superficially observed without attentiveness, many attributes with which a person is actually endowed, might probably remain inconspicuous as if it were submerged. To those who are observant and thorough, such intrinsic qualities will be clearly obvious though they may not be clearly manifested to ordinary people without such depth of knowledge. It will then naturally prompt them again to search for the points connected with the qualities that are submerged and have escaped the notice of those who have failed to pay due attention. (Thi-la-nan-da 1982:xdv)

To be actively 'kindled with the burning desire' is quite different from somewhat more passively 'generating an interest in the reader' suggests a different intentionality behind these modes of writing. The conference, in aiming to foster 'modern' and factually more accurate styles of biography, did not regard contemporary sacred biographical writing highly because such works were written not to be objective or to be of 'general educative interest'. The relationship between the biographer and his subject is different—Buddhist sacred biography extols the virtues of exceptional persons, but does not 'critically' assess these. While the 'traditional' biography establishes the authenticity of the biographical subject as a sacred being with historical continuity back to the lineage of the Buddha, the 'modern' style encourages description of a historical being in a rational manner.

On life

At-htok-pat-ti', the contemporary generic Burmese term for biography, was adopted by contemporary Burmese literary critics to signify our senses of biography (i.e. meaning a person's life and its description). Yet by assuming the Burmese term to be equivalent to the western term, the 1971 conference contributors ignored some fundamental aspects of *hagiography*, historically the most common form of Burmese biography, because the Burmese term *at-htok-pat-ti'* is not coterminous with the English term 'biography'.

32 In U'min-ga' zat, Ma-haw"tha-da' praised the virtues and beauty of Queen Nan-da-dei-wi, which 'aroused the passionate feeling of love and attachment' in King Su-la'ni Bya'ma'dat, whose 'aesthetic desire had impulsed him to see his old beloved favourite Queen Nan-da-dei-wi, once again'.

In the *Encyclopedia Britannica* biographical literature is defined as seeking 'to recreate in words the life of a human being, that of the writer himself or of another person, drawing upon the resources, memory and all available evidences—written, oral, pictorial' (Kindall 1980). Derived from Greek *bio-*, 'life', plus *graphy*, 'writing', the term suggests three distinct orders of meaning, extending from 'life-course of a living (usu. human) being', 'written life of a person', to 'a branch of literature dealing with persons' lives' (OED 1983).

At-htok-pat-ti,³³ on the other hand, the contemporary Burmese generic term for biography, has a much wider latitude of meaning. It is a Pali compound loanword,³⁴ made up of *at-hta*, 'sense, meaning, import, a principle, fundamental idea' and *ok-pat-ti*, 'occurrence'.³⁵ Above all, it does not imply as circumscribed a sense of life as does our term. Taking 'life' in its widest meaning of cause-and-effect, it is used to indicate variously 'facts', 'events', 'a statement of fact', and 'narration of events'. It is used to indicate 'events' in the following cases: 'as for the history of a country, these are the records of a country's *at-htok-pat-ti*' or past happenings' (*nain-ngan-tha-maing" hso-thi-hma naing-ngan i at-htok-pat-ti (wa) shei"haung" hnaung" hpyit-do' go yei" hmat-hta" thi" hmat-dan" bin hpyit thi*, MSK vol 6:110); 'the *at-htok-pat-ti* and circumstances of printing the dictionary' (*a-bi'dan yaik-hneik-gyin" at-htok-pat-ti*'), which refers to the Pali Dictionary on which the Le-di Hsa-ya-daw had been commissioned to work by western Pali scholars (Le-di U" Wun-ni'ta' 1956:191); or in the title 'The history of events relating to the BTNA organisation of the Union of Burma' (*Pyei-daung-zu' Myan-ma-naing-ngan-daw Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe' at-htok-pat-ti' Tha-maing*"). It is used as 'fact' in: 'considering the facts that the eyes are staring and do not wink, he must be the god Sakka'. It is used in the sense of 'statement of facts' in 'they told (the King) where his (Mahosadha's) parents dwelt and all about them and his age'.

The flexibility of the Burmese term *at-htok-pat-ti*, then, goes hand in hand with a flexible notion of life. In chapter 7 I elaborate how 'biography' and 'history' come together in the Ba' Hkin biography, in the Ma-ha-si biography, and in the biography of the Buddha.

33 It needs pointing out that biographies are sometimes not referred to in the title as either *htei-rok-pat-ti* or *at-htok-pat-ti*, but simply as 'his life' (*thu' ba-wa*), as is the case for example with Htei" Hlaing (1978), *He who has introduced Burma to the world—A-na-gan Hsa-ya Thet-gyi*, his life, his teachings, and his grace.

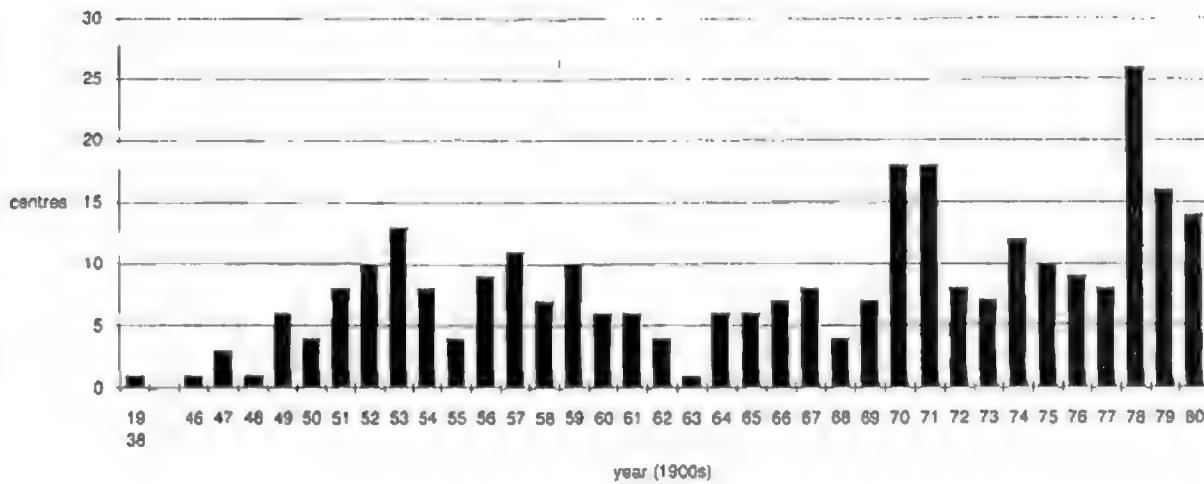
34 Pali *atthapatti*, signifies 'sense, meaning, explanation, interpretation' (Rhys Davids & Stede 1921:5). More specifically, Rhys Davids & Stede suggested *attha* means 'interest, advantage, gain; (moral) good, blessing, welfare; profit, prosperity, well-being', which is also used to refer to interpretation according to the 'letter' (*attha*) as opposed to the 'spirit' (*dhamma*) of a particular passage.

35 Htun' Myin' (1968:460,461) translates *at-hta* as meaning *a-kyauṅ" a-ya*, for which Stewart & Dunn (1940-81) gives 'the facts'. Htun' Myin' (1986) translates *ok-pat-ti* as *hpyit-zin*, meaning 'occurrence', 'event' or 'happening'.

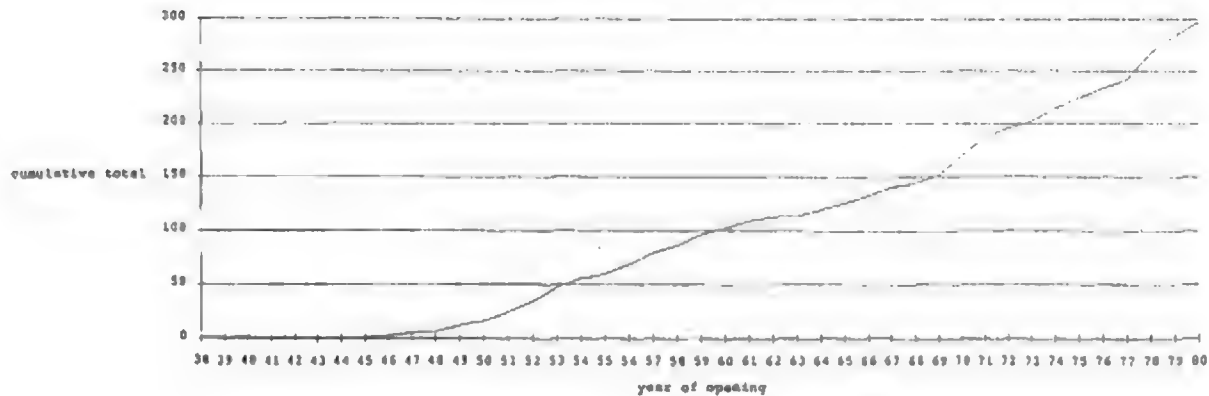
Appendix G.

New Ma-ha-si centres (1938-80)

Number of new Ma-ha-si centres opened per annum (1938-80)



Cumulative total of Mahasi centres opened 1938-1980



Glossary

As noted on page 5 to this thesis, it is difficult to achieve accurate romanisation of Burmese. In order to avoid ambiguities, and to provide a useful reference-tool for others working in the field of Burmese Buddhist studies, this glossary lists the terms used in this thesis with their Burmese script, their approximate English translation, and, where appropriate, their Pali equivalent.

The transcription method used is the conventional transcription (with raised comma tones) as given in John Okell (1971:66-7). Okell (1971:4-6) lists the following about the relationship between Burmese characters and their pronunciation:

The Burmese script symbols do not exactly match the sounds of speech:

- a Burmese script symbol may represent several different sounds
e.g. the symbol ခ် may be represented by the sounds *i'*, *ei'* and *e'* (as in ခ် / ခ် / ခ်)
- a single Burmese speech sound may be represented by several different symbols
e.g. the sound *d* may be written as ဒ ဓ န ဝ
- a Burmese symbol may have no sound at all
e.g. the symbol န as in ကို န
- a Burmese sound may have no particular Burmese symbol
e.g. as in the *a* of *sa-nit* ဝနိ

Romanised script imperfectly represents elements of Burmese script and sound

- some Burmese sounds have no obvious equivalents in the roman alphabet
e.g. Burmese script has six symbols for nasal sounds: င ည န မ ဖ ဖ vs. roman *m, n*
e.g. Burmese has fifteen different basic vowels and diphthongs which, when all its written variations including tonality, nasalisation and glottal stops are taken into account, multiplies into no less than 50 distinct vowel sounds. The roman alphabet has only five basic vowels to denote these.

Methodologies suggested for overcoming these deficiencies

- use roman letters to represent sounds other than those they normally stand for in western languages
e.g. using *k* or *t* for final glottalic stop (adopted here)
- use two roman letters for one Burmese sound or symbol
e.g. *ng* for a nasal final (adopted here)
- use accents or diacritics on their own
e.g. " and ' to represent heavy and creaky tone respectively (adopted here)
- use new letters (not adopted here)
e.g. *θ*
- use roman letters with accents or diacritics (not adopted here)
e.g. *é* for a creaky tone *e*

CONSONANTS

Roman	Burmese
ka'	က
hka'	ခ
ga'	ဂ/ဃ
nga'	င
sa'	စ
hsa'	ဆ
za'	ဇ
nya'	ည/ဉ်
ta'	တ
hta'	ထ
da'	ဒ
na'	န
pa'	ပ
hpa'	ဖ
ba'	ဘ
ma'	မ
ya'	ယ
ya'/ra'	ရ
la'	လ/လှ
wa'	ဝ
tha'	သ
ha'	ဟ

Roman	Burmese
hnga'	၆
hna'	၆
hna'	၇
hnga'	၈
hla'	၉
hwa'	၉

MEDIALS

$$\frac{+}{-} \sqrt{+} = y \text{ an in } \sqrt{y}, p, y'$$

VOWELS

Roman	Burmese
a'	အ
a	အာ
a°	အာ့
aa'	အာ/အာ့/အာ့
aa	အာ/အာ့/အာ့
aa°	အာ့/အာ့/အာ့
ai	အါ အိ
aiŋ'	အိဉ်
aiŋ	အိဉ်
aiŋ°	အိဉ်း
aik	အိက
aung'	အောဉ်
aung	အောဉ်
aung°	အောဉ်း
auk	အောက
ə'	အဲ အဲအဲ
ə	အဲအဲအဲ
ə°	အဲအဲအဲး
ek	အေက
ei'	အေ/အေအဲ
ei	အေ/အေ/အေအဲ
ei°	အေး
ein'	အေ့/အေ့

Roman	Burmese
am	အိမ်/အိမ်
am°	အိမ်/အိမ်
ak	အိပ်/အိပ်
l'	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
l	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
l°	အိပ်/အိပ်
in'	အိပ်/အိပ်
in	အိပ်/အိပ်
in°	အိပ်/အိပ်
ik	အိပ်/အိပ်
aw'	အိပ်/အိပ်
aw	အိပ်/အိပ်
aw°	အိပ်/အိပ်
o'	အိပ်
o	အိပ်
o°	အိပ်
on'	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
on	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
on°	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
ok	အိပ်/အိပ်
u'	အိပ်/အိပ်
u	အိပ်/အိပ်
u°	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
uh'	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
uh	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
uh°	အိပ်/အိပ်/အိပ်
uk	အိပ်/အိပ်

' (single inverted comma) creaky tone

" (double inverted comma) heavy tone

For more detail on pronunciation see Okell (1969)

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
37 Min* hnu* nat-myō'zon	၃၇ မင်း နှင့် နတ် ဗျူစု	the 37 lords & spirits	
37 Min* nat-myō'a-mi al-hlok-pat-ti'	၃၇ မင်း နှင့် နတ် ဗျူစု ကတ္တိပဋိ	biographies of the 37 Burmese named lords & spirits	
A-ba'ya-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw	အဘယာရာမာ ဟောသော	name of monk	
A-ba'ya-ra-ma' mu	အဘယာရာမာ မူ	name of the original monk	
A-ba'ya-ra-ma'daik Da-ma-sa-ni'ya'	အဘယာရာမာသိကဿနာသီရိယာ	title of monk	
Ba'than-ga-pa' Kaw'wi'ca' Hsa-ya-daw	ဘာဏဂါပာ ကောဝိဇာ ဟောသော		
A-bat	အပတ်	breaking of moral code	abbata
a-bein-nyan	အဘိညဏ် / အဘိညာဉ်	special powers	abhiññā
a-bi'da-ma	အဘိဓမ္မာ	Buddhist philosophy	abhidhamma
A-bi'da-ma-pyan'pwa'yei' A-thin'	အဘိဓမ္မာ ပြန့်ပွားရေး အသင်း	Association for Propagation of Buddhist Philosophy	
A-bi'da-ma pi'ta-ka'	အဘိဓမ္မာ ပိတက	the texts on Buddhist philosophy	abhidhamma piṭaka
a-bi'dan yaik-hneik-gyin'	အဘိဓမ္မာ ယိကဏ္ဍိယဉ်	the history of printing a dictionary	
A-bya' A-htet-su' Hs.	အဘျား အထွတ်ဆူ ဟောသော	monk name	
a-deik-htan	အဓိဋ္ဌာန်	a vow	adhithāna
A-deik-htan-go...hsauk-le thi	အဓိဋ္ဌာန်ကို... ဆောက်တည်သည်	to keep a vow	
a-deik-htan hma' thi	အဓိဋ္ဌာန် မှားသည်	to take a mistaken vow	
a-deik-htan hpyin'	အဓိဋ္ဌာန်ဖြင့်	by means of a vow	
a-deik-htan thi	အဓိဋ္ဌာန်သည်	take a vow	
A-deik-sa', U'	ဦးအဓိဋ္ဌ	monk name	
A-deik-sa'wun-tha' htei-ra-pa-dan	ဦးအဓိဋ္ဌဝံသထွေရာပာဏ	biography of a monk	
A-deik-sa'yan-thi, U'	ဦးအဓိဋ္ဌဉာဏ်	name of a monk	
A-di'mauk-hka', U'	ဦးအဓိကမ္ဘ	name of a monk	
a-ha-rei pa-di'ku-la'tha-nya	အဟရေပဒိကုလသမ္ဘာ	perception of loathsomeness of nutrition	āhāragatīkūla-saṅgī
a-hlu	အဟ္လု	offering	
a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'	အဟ္မုဆောင်အဖွဲ့	executive committee	
a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'win	အဟ္မုဆောင်အဖွဲ့ဝင်	member of e.c.	
a-hpei ta-hku' tha' ta-hku'	အဖေတစ်ယောက်တည်း	a father and an only son	
A-hpwe'	အဖွဲ့	association	
a-hset a-mwe	အဆက်အနွယ်	lineage	
A-hsin'a-tan' myin' thi gan-da'win	အဆင်အတင့်ဖြင့်သုံးပါးကဲ့သို့	please write biography to a high standard	
al-hlok-pat-ti' yei'gya' ba	ကတ္တိပဋိရေးရာ		
a-hi-ha-ya'	အဋ္ဌာန်	the 8 precepts	aṭṭhaṅga sīla
a-hka'ka-ha	အဋ္ဌကထာ	commentary	atthakathā
A-hka'ka-ha Thin-ga-ya-na	အဋ္ဌကထာ သင်္ဂါယနာ	Synod of the Commentaries	atthakathā saṅgāyana
A-htet-be-na' wei-da'	အထွတ်မေတ္တာ	a Sanskrit text	Atharvaveda (Skt)
a-htet-myo' kyei'ya	အထွတ်မြို့ကျေး	Upper Burman towns/villages	
a-htet-tha'	အထွတ်သား	Upper Burman (male)	
a-htet-thu	အထွတ်သူ	Upper Burman (female)	
a-htu'	အထူး	special	
A-htu'yon'wun-dauk	အထူးပုဂ္ဂိုလ်ထောက်	special supervisor	
a-kyā' a-myin	အကြွယ်အမြင်	divine sight	
a-kyan' hsa-ya	အကြွယ်သော	spiritual leader using sacred medicines	
a-kyau'ng a-ya	အကြွယ်သော	subject	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
a-kyung'a-kyo'	အကြောင်း အကျိုး	cause & effect	
A-leung'hpaya' a-ye'daw-bon	အလောင်း ဂျက် အရင်း အမြစ်	historical account of the campaign of a king	
A-law'ka' (A-shin)	အလှိုင် အာလောက	name of a monk	
A-le-daik-gyi'	အလယ်တိုက်ကြီး	name of a monastery	
A-le-law'ya' Hsa-ya-daw	အလယ်တိုက် အရာတော်	name of a monk	
A-le-law'ya' kyaung'	အလယ်တိုက် ကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
A-le-law'ya' U' Myt-zu-tha	အလယ်တိုက် ဦး မြတ်သုဏ္ဍာ	name of a monk	
A-ma, (Lu-du' Daw)	အမေ လှိုင်သူ	name of a woman	
A-mya' thon' Myan-ma In-ga-leik Pa-li' a-bi'dan	အမျှား ဘုံ ဖြစ်လာ အာရုံစိုက် ဘုံအဆင့်	a Burmese-English-Pali Dictionary	
A-mya'zon' a-htau-k-a-ku pyu'thi'ko-yei' hmat-dan'	အမျှား ဘုံ အတော် အကျိုး အဆင့် အမြင့်	helpful theories	
a-mye'dan' hta-na'	အမြဲတမ်း ဌာန	permanent centre/dept.	
a-myo' ba-tha tha-tha-na	အမျိုး အသား အသေ နာ	nationality/race, culture/language, Buddhism	
A-myo'tha-mi' sa-hso-daw-mya'	အမျိုး သမီး အစွဲ အတော် များ	female poets	
A-myo'tha-mi' Yaw'gi Saung'shauk-yei' A-hpwe'	အမျိုး သမီး အောင်စွာ ရှေး နှစ်	Female Yaw'gi Caring Association	
a-na-ga'la-win	အနာဂတ် ဝတ်	lineage of future events	anāgata vāṇa
a-na-gan	အနာဂါရ	never-returner	anāgāmin
A-na-gan Hsa-ya Thet-gyi' thu'ba-wa, thu'ta-ya' hnin' thu'kyei'zu'	အနာဂါရ အရာ သမ္မာ (ဦး) ၊ သို့ အဝါ သို့ အတော် နှင့် သို့ ကျေးဇူး	Never-returner Hsa-ya Thet-gyi', his life, his teachings and his benefaction	
A-na-gan Wi'tha-hka'	အနာဂါရ ဝိသုဒ္ဓါ	Never-returner Wi'tha-hka'	
a-na-pa-na'	အာနာပါန	concentration by in- and exhalation	ānāpāna
a-na-pa-na' ka-ma-htan'	အာနာပါန ကမ္မာဠာန	meditation with breathing as object	
A-nan-da, (A-shin)	အလှိုင် အနန္ဒ	name of a monk	
a-nat-ta'	အနတ္တ	non-self	anattā
a-nat-ta' lek-hka-na	အနတ္တ လောက	symptoms of non-self	anattālakkhana
A-nauk-pyīn Hkin-ma'gan-daik	အနောက် ဖြင့် အင် မဟာ ဘုံ ကြီး	name of a monastery	
A-naw-ra'hta	အနော်ရထာ	name of a king	
a-nek-sa'	အနိစ္စ	impermanence	anicca
a-ngwei'	အဋ္ဌ	essence	
A-ni'sa-hkan' Hsa-ya-daw, (Ex-ga'ma-ha-pan-di'ta')	အနိစ္စ အသား အရာတော် (အနိစ္စ အသား အရာတော်)	name of a monk & title	
a-nok-tha-di'	အနုဘဒ္ဒိ	recollection	anussati
A-nu'hlei	အနုပေဋ်	junior monk (less than 10 years)	
a-nu'pat-tha-na	အနုပဿနာ	contemplation	anupassanā
a-nwai-ta' tha-nya-zin	အနုတ္တရ သဘာဝ စဉ်	follow the sense of perception	
a-pa'da-na	အပါပဒါန	biography	apādāna
a-pa'dan	အပါပဒါန	biography	
A-pyi-byi-hsaling-ya Pa-di'pat-ti'lok-ngan' Hta-na'	အပြည်ပြည်ဆိုင်ရာ အာရုံစိုက် နေရာ	International Meditation Centre	
a-pyo' hpaw win	အပြု အစေ့ ဝတ်	puberty	
a-ra-nya'kin	အာရဏိယ	forest life	ārāṇhikā
a-ra'han	အာရဟံ	enlightened one	arahant

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
a-ra-hat	အရဟတ်	enlightened one	arahant
a-riya	အရိယာ	noble one	ariya
A-riya-wun-tha, U'	အရိယာဝုဏ္ဏ	name of a monk	
A-riya', U'	အရိယာ, ဦး	name of a monk	
a-riya thaw'da-ban	အရိယာ သောတဝန်	noble streamwinner	ariya sotāppatti
a-riya weik-za	အရိယာ ဝိဇ္ဇာ	noble sage	ariya vijā (gata)
a-riya zat win thu do' zin mya'	အရိယာ ဇာတဝဋ် သူတော်စင် မြတ်	a member of the caste of nobles	
a-ru-pa'	အရူပ	formlessness	arūpa
A-sa-ra', U'	အသာရာ, ဦး	name of a monk	
a-sa-riya' pa-ran-pa-ra'	အသာရိယာ ပရပရာ	teacher lineage	ācariyapaṇṇiparā
A-sein-na', U'	အရှင်နာ, ဦး	name of a monk	
a-shin (title: see name)	အရှင် (အမျှင်)	lord	
A-shin Thi-la-nan-da Bi-wun-tha', (Hsa-ya-daw)	အရှင်စိလ္လနန္ဒာ ဝိပဿနာ သာဝနာ	name of a monk	
a-taung hnit-hse ba-hso'	အတောင်နှစ်ဆယ်ပုဆိုး	20 cubit long waistcloth	
A-tha-ba', Hs. U'	အထာပာ, ဦး	name of a monk	
a-wei'hma' hlein'kut sa-nit	အဝေး ဂြိုဟ်နိဂ္ဂဟ	by means of remote control	
a-ya-ma-ha'ta' than-gi'ka'	အယမာဟတာ သံဃိက	a type of monastic property	āyama
a-yei'daw-bon	အယျေသဝန်	history of a campaign	
a-yeik	အယျေ	shadow	
a-yeik hko' thi	အယျေကို သို့	take refuge in the shade	
a-yo'o' zai-di-daw	အယောဝ် ဘေးတိုင်	shrine for remains of a saint	
A-yon A-thin'	အယုဒ္ဓါ အသင်	Association	
A-yu-daw Min-ga-la	အယုသော မိဂ္ဂလာ	name of a text	
a-yu-pa'	အရူပ	formlessness	arūpa
A-za-ni Kon'	အဇာနိကုဋ်	name of a hill	
a'da-ma'	အဓမ္မ	contrary to Buddhist truth	adhamma
a'ku'tho	အကုသိုလ်	ament	akusala
a'min-ga-la	အမိဂ္ဂလာ	insuspicious	amangala
a'thu'ba' ka-ma-han'	အသုဘကမ္မဋ္ဌာန	cemetery meditations	asubha kammaṭṭhāna
aing	အိုင်	lake/cathartic space	
an-da' pu'htu'zin	အနိမ္မိတုဒ္ဓါ	low grade saint	andhaputtujāna
at-baw'ka-ti'ka'	အဘောကသီက	open space practice	abhokāsikāṅga
at-ha'	အတ္ထ	sense, meaning	attā
at-ha' ya'tha'	အတ္ထ ယထာ	from meaning	
at-hlok-pat	အတ္ထလုတ်	biography	atthupatti
at-hlok-pat-ti'	အတ္ထလုတ်	biography	
At-hlok-pat-ti' htu'	အတ္ထလုတ်တို့	title of a biography	
At-hlok-pat-ti' sa-bel	အတ္ထလုတ်တို့စာပေ	biographical literature	
At-hlok-pat-ti' sa-bel hni'hnew' hpa-hle-owe' sa-dan'	အတ္ထလုတ်တို့စာပေတို့ နှစ်ပယ်သို့ စာတန်း	proceedings of a conference on biography	
At-hlok-pat-ti' hsaing-ya a-twei'a-kyon-mya'	အတ္ထလုတ်တို့ဆိုင်ရာ အတ္ထကဏ္ဍ	findings in relation to biography	
At-hlok-pat-ti' hsaing-ya naing-gan-gya' a-hso-a-mein'mya'	အတ္ထလုတ်တို့ဆိုင်ရာ အတ္ထကဏ္ဍ	foreign views pertaining to biography	
auk-lan' hsa-ya	အောက်လမ်း အရာ	black magician	

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auk-tan'sa-yei'	အောက်တန်းတင်	low graded clerk	
auk-tha'	အောက်ဘာ	Lower Burman (male)	
auk-thu	အောက်သူ	Lower Burman (female)	
Aung-ba-a', Hpo° Sein, Sein-ga-con°	အောင်ဗဟု၊ ဦးစို၊ ဦးဂဏ္ဍ	title of a biography of 3 actors in a play	
Aung-gyin° Shit-pa° Hs.	အောင်ဦးစိုပါးအရှင်	name of a monk	
aung-gyin° shit pa°	အောင်ဦးစိုပါး	the eight victories	
Aung, (U°)	ဦးအောင်	name of a man	
Aung Baw, (U°)	ဦးအောင်ဇော်	name of a man	
aung bwe°	အောင်ပွဲ	victory festival	
Aung Hsan°, (U°)	ဦးအောင်ဆန်း	name of a man	
Aung Myei Myo°	အောင်မြေမြို့	name of a town	
Aung Myin°, (Min-ga-la U° Aung)	အရှင်မိုးအောင်မြင်	name of a writer	
aung myin thi	အောင်မြင်သူ	to be successful	
Aung Than°, (U°)	ဦးအောင်သန်း	name of a man	
Aung Zei-ya°, (U°)	ဦးအောင်ဇေယျ	name of a man who later became king <i>A. Long-hpa-ya°</i>	
Aw'tha-na-thaw'hkei-ya'pai-ta-pa-hi a'ka' A-hpwe'	အဘွားနာသောအေးယုပတ္တဝါဒက အိန္ဒြိယ	name of an association	
aw'wa-da'	အမူဒါ	instructions	ovāda
ba-dan-ta'	ဘဒ္ဒန္တ	'Ven.'	bhante
ba-dei-tha' bin	ပဒေသာပင်	wishing tree	padesanam + tree
ba-dei-tha hsaing	ပဒေသာဆိုင်	government corporation shops	padesanam + shop
ba-dei-tha hsut yu ya'tha-to shi' thi	ပဒေသာဆွတ်ယုယုယုယုယုယု	one who has plucked the wishing tree	
ba-di° seik thi	ပုထိုးစိတ်ချာ	count the beads	
ba-di'than-bi-da'pat-ta'ya-han'da	ပရိသတ္တိဒါပတိဗဟိန္ဒ	enlightenment of the highest grade	
ba-ma	ဗမာ	Burmese	
Ba-ma-pyei	ဗမာပြည်	Burma	
ba-ma bok-da' ba'tha	ဗမာမုန့်ကံသာ	Burmese 'Buddhendom'	
ba'tha	ဘာသာ	language, subject	bhāṣā
ba'tha-yei'	ဘာသာတရား	religious	
ba'tha thwin° thi	ဘာသာသွင်းသင်	to initiate into a particular religion	
ba-wa-na	ဘဝနာ	meditation	bhāvanā
ba-wa-na pwa° thi	ဘဝနာပျားသူ	meditate	
ba-wa-na snu'hmat thi	ဘဝနာရှုမှတ်သူ	observe and note in meditation	
ba-wa-na si'thpyan° thi	ဘဝနာစိတ်ဖြန့်သူ	intense prayers of meditation	
ba-wa-na tha-maing°	ဘဝနာသမိုင်း	history of meditation	
Ba-wa° kyei'mon	ဘဝဓာတ်ပြ	mirror of life	
Ba-wa°nat-dan	ဘဝနာသမိုင်းပြသူ	biography of a monk (data)	
byan-lun-daw-mu-thaw° kyei°zu°shin Han-tha-wa-di Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya°gyi' i htel-rok-pat-ti	ဗျာနုသမိုင်းပြသူ ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါးအရှင်အာပေ အုယုသမိုင်းပြသူ		
Ba-yin°naung	ဘုရင့်နောင်	name of a king	
Ba-zun-daung	ပုဂံနောင်	a Rangoon neighbourhood	
ba°	ဝါး	numerative for monks and sets	
Ba°ga-ra Hs. Shin Da-ma-belk-nan-da'	ဘုရားအရှင် ဥပသမ္ဘာသီလ	name of a monk	

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Ba' me' Hs.	မာ: မဲ ဘာမော	name of a monk	
Ba' Chit, (U')	မဲ: က ချစ်	name of a man	
Ba' Hkin (Hsa-ya-gyi' U')	ဘာမုနီ: မဲ: က ခင်	name of a meditation teacher	
Ba' Hpo', (U')	မဲ: က ဟို:	name of a man	
Ba' San, U'	မဲ: က ဝံ	name of a man	
Ba' Than', (Wun-na'gyaw-hin U') (also: Bok-da'gaw'tha', Shin)	ဝဏ္ဏ ဂျော့ ထင် မဲ: က သန်း (ပုဒ် ဂောသ, ဂါ)	name of a man	
Ba' Thin, (U')	မဲ: က သင်	name of a man	
Ba' Yin, (U')	မဲ: က ဂ်	name of a man	
Ba'gyi'daw	ဘမိုးဝေ	name of a king	
Ban-du'la'	ဝဇ္ဇိလ	name of a Burmese hero	
Ban'maw' Hs.	ဝဇ္ဇိမောဘာမော	name of a monk	
Ba-thein	ပုသိန်	Bassein (place name)	
bat-da-baing	ပုသိန် ဂေါင်	Bowl-funder practice	
Bauk-daw	ဘောကဝေ	place name	
baung	ဘောင်	collection, society	
baw'di'win	ဘောဝိဝင်	history of bodhi trees	bodhivamsa
baw'di'pek-hid'ya' ta-ya'	ဘောဝိ ပုဇ္ဈိမ ဘာပ:	of enlightenment	bodhipakkhiya
beik-hku-ni-ma' kyaung'	ဘိက္ခုနီ မာ ကျောင်း	monastery for female monks	
Beik-hku-ni tha-tha-na nnin' thi-a'shin tha-maing'	ဘိက္ခုနီ သာသနာ ဒွင် သိက္ခာ သိက္ခိ:	history of female monks and nuns	
beik-hpyu le' pi'	ဝိမာ ဖြူ လိပိ:	after having changed to wearing a white cloth	
beik-theik	ဘိသိက	consecration	abhiseka
beik-theik hsa-ya	ဘိသိက ဘာပ	master of consecration	
Bin-ka'ta-ra-man, (Mr.)	ပုဂံက ကင် ကတက ရှိ	name of a man	
bo-kei	မိုးကေ	western style haircut	
bo'daw	မိုးဝေ	an aspirant sage	
Bo'wa-zi-ra' at-hlok-pat-ti'	မိုးဝေ ဘိက္ခုပတ္တိ	a biography	
bo	ပိုလ်	officer	bala
bok-da'	ပုဒ်	Buddha	Buddha
Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe' (BTNA)	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ပုဂံက က ခွဲ	name of a Buddhist association	
Bok-da' Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-hpwe'gyok i si'myin'mya' nnin' si'kan'mya'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ပုဂံက က ခွဲ ချုပ် ခံ စား: ယျှင်း: ယှား: ခွဲ: စား: ယှား:	the rules and regulations of BTNA	
bok-da'ba-tha	ပုဒ် သာသနာ	Buddhendom	buddha bhāṣā
bok-da'ba-tha-win	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင်	Buddhist (in a wide sense, lay people)	
Bok-da'ba-tha-win-daing' thi'thin'thaw' a-gyek-mya'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင် ချိန်း: သိ သင်္ခါ သော ဘိသိက ယှား:	things every Buddhist should know	
Bok-da'ba-tha-win-mya' nnin' nat ko'gwe hmu' pyat-tha-na	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင် ယှား: ခွဲ: နတ် မိုး: ချုပ် ခံ ပုသိန်	the problem of Buddhists and spirit worship	
bok-da'ba-tha-win ein-daung-zu'daing'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင် ယှား: ခွဲ: နတ် ချုပ် ခံ	all Buddhist households	
bok-da'ba-tha-win'jo' l da-tel' hten'zan a-ya'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင် ချိန်း ခံ ဝေ: ထုံး: စာ ဟဲ့	according to the customs of Buddhism	
bok-da'ba-tha-yei'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ချိန်း:	in Buddhist matters	
Bok-da'ba-tha hsaing-ya a-hiwei-dwei ba-hu'thu'da' ma-ti'ka kyan'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ချိန်း: ပုဒ် သာသနာ ဝင် ယှား: ခွဲ: နတ် ယှား ဝိ က ယှား:	Things to know about Buddhism (title of a book)	
Bok-da'ba-tha hso da ba le'	ပုဒ် သာသနာ ချိန်း က နိ	what is Buddhism?	

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bok-da'ba-tha myan-ma lu-myo'	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်ကလေး	Burmese Buddhist	
bok-da'ba-tha nwe	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာ	lineage of Buddhism	
bok-da'ba-tha nwe win hi'lei-thi thu-daw-zin	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာဝန်တော် အောင်တော်	good Hi'lei-thi members and associates of Buddhism	
bok-da'ba-tha ta-u'	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်	a Buddhist	
bok-da'ba-tha ta-ya'	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်	Buddhist truths	
bok-da'ba-tha tha-tha-na	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်	Buddhism	
bok-da'da-ma'	ဗုဒ္ဓဝန်	Buddhist truths	
Bok-da'dai-ta' Hsa-ya-daw, (Thi-ho A-shin)	ဗုဒ္ဓဝန်တော် ဗုဒ္ဓဒါနတော်	name of a monk	
Bok-da'gaw'tha', (Ma'ha)	ဗုဒ္ဓဝန်တော်	name of monk scholar	
bok-da'pa-mok-hka'than-gi'ka'	ဗုဒ္ဓပရိသတ်	property belonging to the Buddha and monks	Buddha parikkhā- sanghika
bok-da'tha-tha-na	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာ	Buddhism	buddha sāsana
bok-da'tha-tha-na-win	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာဝန်	Buddhist (in a narrow sense), monk	buddha sāsana vamsa
Bok-da'tha-tha-na' A-kyo'thsaung A-thin'	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်အကျိုးတော်အစည်း	Association for the Benefit of Buddhism (set up by U' Ba' Hkin)	
bok-da'tha-tha-na'win hpon-gyi' kyaung' nu ywel' a-be nma shi' ba me ni	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်ဝန်တော် အစည်းအရုံးအကျိုးတော်	where is to be found a (Theravada) Buddhist monastery	
Bok-da'tha-tha-na Pa-ō'pat-ti'tha-na-pyu' A-hpwe'gyok	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာတော်ပရိသတ်အကျိုးတော်	Society for the Propagation of Practice	
bok-da'wa-di	ဗုဒ္ဓဝါဒီ	Buddhist views	buddha vāda
Bok-da'wei-ya-wut-sa'	ဗုဒ္ဓဝေယျဝိသုဒ္ဓိ	duties towards the Buddha	buddha vāyāvaccam
bok-da'win	ဗုဒ္ဓဝင်	biography (history) of the Buddha	buddha vamsa
Bok-dok-pat-ti'	ဗုဒ္ဓဝန်တော်	biography of the Buddha	Buddhōpatti
Bok-dok-pat-ti' pyo'	ဗုဒ္ဓဝန်တော်ပျို့	biography of the Buddha in a poem	
Bon-gyaw-dak Hs.	ဘုရားရှင်တော်	name of a monk	
Bu-ni'dat zat	ဘုရားရှင်တော်	title of a Buddha birth story	Bhūnidatta jātaka
Bu' Ga-lei', (U')'	ဗုဒ္ဓကမ္ဘာ	name of a man	
owe'	ဝံ	title, monk name	
bya'ma	ဗြဟ္မ	divine being	Brahma
bya'ma wi'ta-ra'	ဗြဟ္မဝိတရာ	the 4 divine states of mind	Brahma-vihāras
byo' hit thi	ဗျို: ဟိတ် သံတော်	shout out loudly, hey you!	
byo' hto' tni	ဗျို: ဟိတ် သံတော်	thrusting out, hey you!	
Chan-tha-gyi' Hs.	ဇာန်: သံတော်	name of a monk	
Chan'myei' Yeik-tha	ဇာန်: ယေိက သံတော်	name of a meditation centre	
Chan'tha-gyi' U' Lek-hka-na' Hsa-ya-daw	ဇာန်: သံတော် ဗုဒ္ဓလောကသီလ	name of a monk	
Chaung'kauk Hs.	ဇာန်: ကောက် သံတော်	name of a monk	
Chi-ba Ywa	ချီနီ ယွာ	name of a village	
chi-man'gwin' sut thi	ချီနီ သံတော်: ခွင်း စွပ် သံတော်	putting the charm thread around the shoulder	
chi' hmyauk thi	ချီ: ချီနီ သံတော်	to exalt	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
chi' hmyin' laik thi	ချီးမြှင့်လှိုက်သတိ	to exalt	
chi' hmyin' thi	ချီးမြှင့်သတိ	to exalt	
Chi Aung, (Da-ma'ka-hu'ka' Hsa-ya)	ဝိဇ္ဇာကထိကဘဂ္ဂဝိဒ္ဓိ: ဦးချစ်ကောင့်	name of a monk (lecturer)	
Chit Tin, (U)	ဦးချစ်တင်	name of a man	
da-baung	တပေါင်း	name of a month (lunar)	
da-bo'dwe'	တပို့တွဲ	name of a month (lunar)	
da-byi'	တပည့်	a pupil	
da-byi'daw (or da-be'daw)	တပည့်တော်	"I" (in speaking to a monk)	
da-go'	တန်ခိုး	supernatural power	
Da-gon-ta-ya Da-gon-ta-ya	ဒဂုံတရားစာဒဂုံတရား	title of an autobiography	
Da-gon Nat-shin	ဒဂုံနတ်ရှင်	an author	
da-gu'	တန်ခိုးရဲ့	name of a Burmese lunar month	
da-ha da-tu'win	တရားတရားဝင်	teaching of the enlightenment of the Buddha, silent Buddhas & enlightened ones	dāhādātū vamsa
Da-ta'byaw-bwe-gyi' Ywa	ဒဂုံဗျာဒိတ်ကြီးရွာ	a village	
Da-ma-sa-ti'ya'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဝိပဿ	teacher of the dhamma	dhammacārya
Da-ma-set-kya	ဝိဇ္ဇာစကြာ	Buddha's first discourse	dhammacakkā
da-ma-yon	ဝိဇ္ဇာရုံ	assembly hall	
da-ma'	ဝိဇ္ဇာ	the Buddha's teachings, mind object, phenomena	dhamma
da-ma' da-na'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဒါန	meritorious donation	dhamma dāna
da-ma' ka-hu'ka'	ဝိဇ္ဇာကထိက	lecturer in dhamma/preacher	dhamma-kathika
da-ma' let-hsaung	ဝိဇ္ဇာလှော်ဆောင်	meritorious present	
da-ma' meik-hswel	ဝိဇ္ဇာမိတ်ဆွေ	friends in Buddhism	
da-ma' nu'pat-tha-na	ဝိဇ္ဇာနုပဿနာ	contemplation on mental objects	dhamma nupassanā
Da-ma' wi'ni'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဝိနည်း	the monastic moral code of conduct	dhamma vinaya
da-ma' ya-ta'	ဝိဇ္ဇာရသာ	the flavour of Buddhist truth	dhamma rasa
Da-ma'dein-na	ဝိဇ္ဇာဒိန္နာ	name of a woman (1st to have novitiation)	
da-ma'han-da-baung' shi-thaung' lei'daung	ဝိဇ္ဇာသမ္ဘာတေဇိကသမ္ဘာတေဇိကသမ္ဘာတေဇိက	the 84,000 constituents of the Buddha's truths	
Da-ma'sa-ri, U'	ဦးဝိဇ္ဇာတရား	name of a monk	
Da-ma'tha-ra', U'	ဦးဝိဇ္ဇာသာယာ	name of a monk	
Da-ma'yaung-chi Pagoda	ဝိဇ္ဇာကျောင်းကြီးပေတေ	name of a pagoda	
Da-ma'zei-di Min' at-hok-pat-ti'	ဝိဇ္ဇာသေတိမင်းကတ္တပတ္တိ	title of a biography (King)	
da-na'	ဒါန	Buddhist chanty	dāna
da-na' hki	ဒါနခေတ်	period of charity	
da-na' shin	ဒါနရှင်	benefactor	
Da-nya'wa-di a-yei'daw-bon	ဝိဇ္ဇာသမ္ဘာတေဇိကသမ္ဘာတေဇိကသမ္ဘာတေဇိက	history of a campaign	
da-ta' thi-ta'	ဒီသမ္ဘာတေဇိက	the ten precepts	dasanga śīla
da-tu' neik-ban	တရားနိဗ္ဗာန်	the time all Buddha's relics come together	dātū nibbāna
da-tu' tha-ta-na	တရားသမ္ဘာတေဇိက	the time when da-tu' neik-ban is no longer possible	dātū sāsana
da-ya-ga	ဒါယကာ	donor (male)	dāyaka
da-ya-ga ma'	ဒါယကာမာ/ဒါယိကမာ	donor (female)	dāyikā

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daik	တိုက်	brick building, monastic complex	
Daik-so*	တိုက်ဆိုး	an author	
Daik-so* / Min' hnin' Sa-hso	တိုက်ဆိုးမင်းစင်စာဆို	title of a collection of summary biographies	
Daik-thit Hsa-ya-daw U* Ein-da'wun-tha'bi'wun-tha	တိုက်သစ်ဆရာတော် ဦးညွန့်ဝံသာမီဝံသာ	name of a monk	
Dan-mi'ka-ya-ma' Hs.	တရားမိကျားဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
dat	တတ်	inherent nature, energy	dhātu
dat-daw kya' de	တတ်သောကျသုတ်	'telling relics' (<i>golden discovery</i>)	
dat-lon*	တတ်လှီး	alchemic stone	
dat-mi'	တတ်မီး	electricity	
dat-si' thi	တတ်မီးသိမ်း	a form of possession by a sage	
daw'tha'	တောသ	anger	dosa (kilesa)
Daw (title: see name)	တော	auntie / <i>Ma</i> (note)	
dei-wi	တေဝီ	female deity / <i>beautiful</i>	devī
di-pa-ni	ဒီပာနီ	commentary	dīpanī
di-pa'win	ဒီပဝင်	history of Sri Lanka	dīpavamsa
Di-pin-ka'ra Bok-da'	ဒီပင်္ကရာဇ်	a Buddha	Dipankara Buddha
dok-hka'	တုက္ခ	suffering	dukkha
dok-hka' thit-sa	တုက္ခသိက္ခ	the truth of suffering	dukkha sacca
du-din	တုတင်	austerities	dutanga
du'tiya' wa-zo	တုတိယဝါဆို	the intercalated month every 3 years	
dwel*	တွေး / တွေး	youngest (<i>khwei</i>), and (<i>dwel</i>)	
Ei-hi'pa-thi'kaw*	တေဝီပထိကော	Buddha's invitation to experience, observe, and conclude (<i>come + see</i>)	ehi-passiko
Ei-in-dei'bil, (Mr.)	တေဝီဒေါင်းဗိုလ်	name of a man (<i>Isa David?</i>)	
ei-ka'tha-neik	တေဝီသနိက	eating food at only one sitting a day	ekāsanka
Ei-mu-thi-ya, (Mr.)	တေဝီသီယာ	name of a man	
ei'gyin*	တေဂျိန်	eulogy	
Ei Maung, (U)	တေမောင်	name of a man	
Ein-da-ka', U*	တေသကာ	name of a monk	
Ein-da-sa-ra', U*	တေသရာ	name of a monk	
Ein-da-tha-ba', U*	တေသဘာ	name of a monk	
ein-da-yei	တေထွေး	composure	indriyam
Ein-da'wun-tha', (A-shin)	တေသဝုဏ်စာ	name of a monk	
Ein-daw'ba-tha', U*	တေသဘာမာ	name of a monk	
Ek-ga'da-ma', U*	တေဂါထာမာ	name of a monk	
Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-dī'a'	တေဂါထာမာပဏ္ဍိတ	a monastic title	
Ek-ga'ma-ha-pan-dī'a'	တေဂါထာမာပဏ္ဍိတ	a biography	
Ma-ha-si-hlei-myat / at-hlok-pat	မဟာစိလိမ္မိတ / အတလ္လပတ်		
Ek-ga'wun-tha', (A-shin)	တေဂါသဝုဏ်စာ		
First Yei-wun'kyau'ng daik Hs. U*	တေဝီပထမတော်တော်တော်တော်တော်	name of a monk	
Za-yan-da'	တေဃာ	verse	

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ga-daung in'gyi	ခါးတောင့် ဂါနီ	embroidered shirt	
ga-hta	ဂါထာ	verse (Pali)	gāthā
ga-ma'wa-thi	ဂါမဝါသီ	village-dweller	gāma-vāsin
ga-yu'ban	ဂရုဘဏ်	immovable property (?)	garubhaṇḍam
Gain'dauk Hs. U' Gan-da'ma	ဂိုဏ်းတော်မှ ဘုရားတော် ဂန္ဓာမာ	name of a monk	
gaing' hsa-ya	ဂိုဏ်းဆရာ	head of a sect	
gaing' weik-za	ဂိုဏ်းဗိုလ်	sage/head of a sect	
gaing'win	ဂိုဏ်းဝင်	member of a sect	
gaing'win pok-ko	ဂိုဏ်းဝင် ဗုဒ္ဓါနန္ဒ	member of a sect	
gam-bi-ra gam-bi-ra' ma-ha-neik-bu-ta'	ဂမ္ဘီရ ဂမ္ဘီရမဟာနိဗ္ဗာန်	title of an early work on WM	
Gan-da-ma, Hs. U'	ဘုရားတော် ဦးဂန္ဓာမာ	name of a monk	
gan-da-ri	ဂန္ဓာရီ	belong to Gandhara city, a charm	gandhārī
Gan-da-win Pok-ko-gyaw-mya' at-thok-pat-ti'	ဂန္ဓဝင် ဗုဒ္ဓါနန္ဒကပ္ပိယမာ: အတ္ထပတ္တိ	title of a book	
gan-da-ya' yeik-tha	ဂန္ဓာရ ဂိုဏ်းသာ	oasis	
gan'da'du-ra'	ဂန္ဓဝရီ	the duty of scriptural learning	gantha dhura
gan'da'win	ဂန္ဓဝင်	history of literature	gantha vamsa
Gon-daw a-sik, 108 pa-di' seik-ni' hnin' kyin'zin.	ဂိုဏ်းတော်မှ ၁၀၈ ပာဌိနိဗ္ဗာန် ၈၀၃၃၃ နှစ်ကျော်	title of a book	
gon-du'zaung a-hmu'zaung a-hpwe'win	ဂိုဏ်းထူးဆောင် အမှူးဆောင် အဖွဲ့ဝင်	honorary trustees	
gon-kyei'zu'	ဂိုဏ်းကျေးဇူး	grace	
gu'ru'gyi'	ဂူရုဦး	teacher (used by Indians for BK)	guru + 'big'
Gwei'bin-law'ya' Hs.	ဂွေ: ပင်တော်မှ ဘုရားတော်	name of a monk	
gyi'	ဂွီ:	big	
Han-tha-wa'di Hs.	ဟင်သာဝတီ ဆရာတော်ကြီး	name of a monk	
H'tai-thi	ဟိုတေသီ	name of a charitable food offering society at the Ma-ha-si meditation centre	
hin-du ba-tha	ဟိန္ဒူသာသာ	Hinduism	
Hin'yan-kn' Hs.	ဟင်: ဂျိယန်း: ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
hka-lu'pyit-sa	ခလုပုဏ္ဏ	no second helpings	khalu-pacchā
hka-me'daw	ခမ္ဘည်းတော်	title of sponsor of ordination, father	
hka-rit-yan ba-tha-win	ခရစ်ယံသာသာဝင်	Christian	
hka' hle'	ခါ.ရဲ	ascetic life	
Hkaing, (Nel-la'weik-za Hsa-ya)	နေလ်ဗိုလ် ဆရာဗိုလ်	name of a man	
hkan-da neik-ban	ခန္ဓာနိဗ္ဗာန်	cessation of sensual existence	khaṇḍa nibbāna
Hkan-di' Hs.	ခန္ဓိ: ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Hkan-di' Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' i hteik-rok-pat-ti'	ခန္ဓိ: ဆရာတော် ဘုရားကြီး၏ ထေရ်ပတ္တိ	biography of a monk	
Hkan-di, U'	ခန္ဓိ: ခန္ဓိ	name of a monk	
hkan-di	ခန္ဓိ	forbearance	khaṇṭi
Hkei-ma-thi-wun Hs.	ခေမာသီဝံ ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Hkei-ma, U'	ခေမာသီ	name of a monk	
Hkei-mein-da', (Hsa-ya-daw U')	ခေမိန္ဒ, ဆရာတော်ဦး	name of a monk	
hkin-bya'	ခင်ဗျား	Sir (used by men in polite address)	

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Hkin-gyi* Hpyaw, (Tha-tha-na-baing Hsa-ya-daw)	ခင်ကြီး ဖျော်, သာသနာ ပိုင် ဆရာတော်	name of a monk (head of the order)	
Hkin-ma'gan-daik U* Yei-wa-da' Hs.	ခင်မာ ဂန် တိုက် ဦး ယေဝသ ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Hkin-ma'gan Daik	ခင်မာ ဂန် တိုက်	name of a cluster of monasteries	
Hkin-mun Hs.	ခင် မွန် ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Hkin, (Daw)	ဒေါ်ခင်	name of a woman	
Hköt-san	ခေတ်ဝတ်	modern	
hkä pyin-nya	ခေတ်ပညာ	modern knowledge	
Hköt-da'ka-pa-hla' A-hla'ga-hla	ခုဒ္ဒကပါဌ-အာဂ္ဂမထာ	title of a commentary	Khuddakapāṭha
Hku'da-ka' ni'ka	ခုဒ္ဒကနိကာယ်	title of a nikāya text	khuddaka nikāya
Hku'hñit-nei' Bok-da-win Hpa-ya'shi'hko' (1898)	ခုဒ္ဒကနိကာယ် ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ နိပါတ် (၁၈၉၈)	title of a book	
Hla', (Lu-du' U')	ရှုထူးဦး	name of an author	
Hla' Hlun', (Ko)	ရှုထူးလှိုင်	name of a man	
Hla' Kyaing, (Pa-ra'gu U* Hla' Kyaing)	ပါရဂူဦး ဖျော်	name of a man (author)	
Hla' Kyaing, (U')	ဦး ဖျော်	name of a man	
Hla' Maung, (U')	ဦး မောင်	name of a man	
Hla' Min', (U')	ဦး မင်း	name of a man	
Hla' Tha-mein	ရှုသိမ်း	name of a man (author)	
Hlaung-gyaing'de'ga' Hngel-nge-mya'	လှောင်ကျွန်းဆရာတော်၏ နိဂုံး	title of a modern book on biographical episodes	
Hlaw-ga'thon'daung-hmu'	လှော်ကား သုံး ထောင် ရွာ	head of 3,000 barges	
Hman-nan' Ma-ha-ya-za-win-daw-gyi'	ပြန်ပန်း ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ	Glass Palace Chronicle	
hman ba-del-tha	ပြန်ပန်းသား	chandelier	
hmat-tan' tha-baw' pa thaw' at-hlok-pet-ti'	ပြန်ပန်းသား သမ္မာပါသော ဘိက္ခုနီတို့၏ နိဂုံး	'biographies which are records' - <i>historical biography</i>	
Hmin, (U')	ဦးမင်း	name of a man	
hngat	ငှက်	bird	
Hngat-dwin' Hs.	ငှက်သွင်း ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
hngat-hka'	ငှက်ခါး	Burmese roller bird	
Hñit-gyeik-shit-hsu Hsa-ya-daw	နှစ်ကျွန်းရှစ်ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
hok-ke'	ဟုတ်ကဲ့	'Yes'	
hpa-ya'	ဘုရား	Lord, Buddha	
hpa-ya' da-ga-ma'	ဘုရားဒကာမ	builder of a pagoda	
hpa-ya' laung'	ဘုရားရောင်	Buddha-to-be	
hpa-ya' shi'hko'	ဘုရားရှိခိုး	worship the Buddha	
hpa-ya' tha'daw	ဘုရားသားတော်	'son of the Buddha', monk	
Hpa-ya'daik-gyi' Hs.	ဘုရားတိုက်ကြီး ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
hpaung'pein ka-ma-tan'	ပေါင်းစုံ ကျွန်းခြင်း	meditation on the rise-and-fall of the belly	
hpaung'thi pein-thi	ပေါင်းစုံစုံ ဖန်သွင်း	rising and falling (of belly)	
Hpei Thin, (U')	ဦးဖိုးပေသင်း	name of a man	
Hpo' Chon, (U')	ဦးဖိုးချို	name of a man	
Hpo' Hlaing', (Yaw'min'gyi' U')	ဟော့မင်းကြီး ဦးချို	name of a man	
Hpo' Hlaing, (Hsa-ya-gyi')	ဆရာတော် ဦးချို	name of an author	
hpo' hpwa' paing myel	ဘိုးဘွား ပိုင်မြေ	land owned by ancestors	
Hpo' Kya', (U')	ဦးဖိုးကျား	name of a man	
Hpo' Thon, (Pyin-ya-mun'gyi'naung' U')	ဟော့မင်းကြီး ပေါင်းစုံ ဦးချို သွင်း	name of a man (see Head of (the section on) ...)	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
Hpo'gyi', (U')	ဟို: ဂျိ: ဇိ:	name of a man	
hpo'thu-daw	ဟို: သူ တော်	monastic school boy dressed in white	
hpo win thi	ဟို ဝင် သာဓ်	'go into the oven' (renew life)	
hpok-gyi'	ဟုတ် ဇိ:	demon	
Hpon-daw-gyi' U' Hmu'	ဟုတ်: တော် ဇိ: ဟို: ဟို:	name of a monk	
Hpon'daw-gyi' U' Kyauck	ဟုတ်: တော် ဇိ: ဟို: ကျောက်	name of a monk	
Hpon'daw-gyi' U' Thi-ta' ntel-rok-pat-ti'	ဟုတ်: တော် ဇိ: ဟို: သီ တေ ဝေ ပုတ္တိ	biography of a monk	
hpon'gyi'	ဟုတ်: ဇိ:	monk	
hpon'gyi' kyaung'tha'	ဟုတ်: ဇိ: ကျောင်း: သာ:	monastic student	
hpon'gyi' kyaung'	ဟုတ်: ဇိ: ကျောင်း:	monastery	
Hpon'gyi' kyaung'tha' thu daung' sa', in-ga-leik kyaung'tha' a-kaung' sa'	ဟုတ်: (ဇိ: ကျောင်း: သာ: သူ တော်: တေ: အိဂါလိက ကျောင်း: သာ: အ ကျောင်း: တေ:	monastic students are beggars, English students are best	
hpu' twei' ya' me	ဟု: တွေ ဂျိ ဝေ ပုတ္တိ	will have to worship	
Hpun' Shein, (U')	ဟို: ဒွံ ဂျိ	name of a man	
Hpwa'daw Monastery	ဟွာ: တော် ကျောင်း:	name of a monastery	
Hpyauk-bin monastery	ဟွေ ဟ် ပ် ကျောင်း:	name of a monastery	
hpyit-pyet	ဟုတ် ပျက်	birth and destruction	
hpyit-zin	ဟုတ် ဝဇ်	occurrence (occurrence in parents)	
Hsa-ha -bi'ng'	ဆာ ဟ် ဂျိ	a type of ya-han'sa who achieved the 6 powers	
Hsa-ha' Thin-ga-ya-na	ဆာ သံ ဂါ ဝဇာ	Sixth Synod	Chattila Sangayana
Hsa-ha' Thin-ga-ya-na-wun-hsaung Than-ga' A-hpwe'	ဆာ သံ ဂါ ဝဇာ ဝဇ် တော် သံ ဆာ အ ဝေ	The monastic committee in charge of the Sixth Synod	
hsa-ya (title: see name)	ဆာ ဟ်	teacher	
Hsa-ya-daw (title: see name)	ဆာ ဟ် တော်	senior monk with own monastery, title	
Hsa-ya-daw A-shin-hpa-ya'gyi'	ဆာ ဟ် တော် အရှင် ဟုတ် ဇိ:	'Holy teacher lord big'	
Hsa-ya-daw A-shin Thaw'ba-na'i Mei-rok-pat-ti' a-kyin'	ဆာ ဟ် တော် အရှင် သာ ဟ် ဝေ ပုတ္တိ အ ကျောင်း:	biography of a monk	
Hsa-ya-gyi' U' Ba' Hkin i tha-tha-na-pyu'lok-ngan'mya'	ဆာ ဟ် ဇိ: ဟို: အရှင် အာ သာ ဟ် ဝေ ပုတ္တိ ဟို: ဟို:	the missionary works of U' Ba' Hkin	
Hsa-ya-ma' (title: see name)	ဆာ ဟ် မ	lady teacher	
Hsa-ya (title: see name)	ဆာ ဟ်	teacher (male) or nun (in comb. with 'big' (gyi) in 'Little' (bi'))	
hsa-ya a-sin a-hset	ဆာ ဟ် အရှင် အဆက်	teacher lineage	
Hsa-ya hpyit-thin beik-theik ming-nga-la	ဆာ ဟ် ဝေ သံ အိဂါလိက မိဏ္ဍာနာ	title of a book	
Hsa-ya Lun' at-htok-pat-ti'	ဆာ ဟ် ဟ် အဆက်	biography of a man	
hsa-ya sin da-byi' zet	ဆာ ဟ် ဝေ အဆက်	teacher-pupil lineage	
hsa-ya sin zet	ဆာ ဟ် ဝေ ဆက်	teacher lineage	
hseing' waing'	ဆိုင်: ဝိုင်:	orchestra	
hsan	ဆန်	uncooked rice (husked)	
hse zaung dwe'	ဆန် တောင် ဝေ	the ten parts	
hse' laik thi	ဆေ: လိုက် သာဓ်	effective medicine	
Hselt-hkun Ywa	ဆေ: ဝေ ဝေ	name of a village	
hset	ဆက်	lineage, link	
Hsi'ban'ni Hs.	ဆီ: ဟ် ဝေ ဆာ တော်	name of a monk	
Hsin-byu-shin	ဆင် ဝေ ဝေ	name of a king	
Hsin-byu-shin a-yei'daw-bon	ဆင် ဝေ ဝေ အ ဝေ: တော် ဝေ	history of a campaign	
Hsin-de' Hsa-ya-daw	ဆင် တေ ဆာ တော်	name of a monk	

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hsu taung hma thi	ဆုတောင်း ဟော သဂ္ဂ	ask for a boon mistakenly	
hsu taung thi	ဆုတောင်း သဂ္ဂ	ask for a boon	
hsun daw gyi bwe	ဆွမ်း တောင်း ပွဲ	offering	
hsun za thi	ဆွမ်း စား သဂ္ဂ	partake of offering	
hswe ya du	ဆွဲ ဂါထာ / ဆွဲ ဂါထာ	a type of verse composed on the occasion of a novitiation ceremony	
hta mein	ဝတ်	female dress	
hta na	ဌာန	department/centre	
hta na gwe	ဌာန ပွဲ	sister centre	
hta ra htei	တရုတ်	a monk of 10 rainy seasons	
Hian zin Ywa	ထန်းစင်ဒွါ	name of a village	
Htaung hnin Lu tha	တောင် နှစ် လူ သား	title of a modern style biography	
hte	တော်	elder, monk	thera
Htei ra pa dan	တော် ရာ ပါ သန်	biography of a monk	therapadāna
Htei ra pa dan hnin htei ri a pa dan	တော် ရာ ပါ သန် နှင့် တော် ရာ ပါ သန်	biography of early monks and female monks	
hte ra	တော်	monk	thera
Htei ra wa da	တော် ရာ သီ သ	teaching of the elders, Theravada Buddhism	Theravāda
hte rok pak ti	တော် ဂုဏ် ပါ သန်	biography of a monk	
Htin Hpat, (U) (Maung Htin)	ဦး ဆင် ဟင် (မောင် ဆင်)	name of a man	
hton ku thi	ထွန်း ကို သဂ္ဂ	to extend sagehood	
htu pa win	ထူ ပါ ဝင်	history of stupas and pagodas	thūpa vamsa
Htun Ei, U	ဦး ထွန်း ခေါ်	name of a man	
Htun Hla, (Bo)	ဦး ထွန်း ဟ	name of a man	
Htun Hlaing, (U)	ဦး ထွန်း နှစ်	name of a man	
htun ka nei de	ထွန်း ကေး နေ သက်	flourishes	
Htun Ok, (Tha hkin)	သခင် ထွန်း ဟင်	name of a man	
Htun, U	ဦး ထွန်း	name of a man	
Htut hkaung Hsa ya daw	ထွန်း ခေါ် ဆုတောင်း	name of a monk	
Htwā Nyo, (Shin)	ဒ် ဆွေ နှစ်	name of an author	
I-yu wei da	ဣဒ္ဓိဝေဒ	name of a vedic text	Ṛgveda
In-gyin bin taw ya	အင်းဂြိုင်း ပင် တော ဂ	name of a forest monastery	
In-gyin taw daik	အင်းဂြိုင်း တော တိုက်	name of a monastic cluster	
in	အင်း	caulobistic squares / the	
In ya myaing	အင်း မား မြိုင်	name of a road in Rangoon	
Ka ba tha tha na pyu pok ko htu	ကမ္ဘာ သာသနာပြု ပုဂ္ဂိုလ် စု	a special Buddhist world missionary	
Ka ba Ei Hpa ya	ကမ္ဘာ ခေါ် ဟုဏ်	name of a pagoda	
ka daw bwe	ကန် တော ပွဲ	worship festival, offering day	
ka hson	ကဆုန်	name of a Burmese lunar month	
ka htein	ကဆုန်	robe offering ceremony	kathina
ka la ya na pu htu zin	ကလျာ နေ ယူ ဆင်	those who know right from wrong	kalyāṇa putthujāna
Ka la, (U)	ဦး ကလား	name of a man	
ka la be	ကလား ပဲ	lentils	

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ka-la'hpyu	ကလား (လူ)	European (white foreigner)	
ka-la'me	ကလား (လူ)	Indian (black foreigner)	
ka-la' pyet thi	ကလား ပျက်စီးသွား	destruction of the era	
Ka-lyā-na', U'	ဦး ကလျာဏ	name of a monk	
Ka-lyā-ni-taw'ya' Hpon'daw-gyi'	ကလျာဏိတောယာ ဟုံပင်သုတေသန	name of a monk	
Ka-lyā-ni Thein	ကလျာဏိ တေဇ်	name of an ordination hall	
ka-ma-htan'	ကမ္မတ္တနာ	meditation object	kammathāna
ka-ma-htan-na' sa-n'ya'	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ဝိနည်း	meditation teacher	kammathāna acarya
ka-ma-htan' a' hlok thu	ကမ္မတ္တနာ အား ဟုတ်သုတေသန	meditation	
ka-ma-htan' hsa-ya	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ဆရာ	meditation teacher	
ka-ma-htan' hta-na'	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ဌာန	meditation centre	
ka-ma-htan' htaing thv	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ဧကန်သုတေသန	site in meditation	
ka-ma-htan' kyaung'	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ကျောင်း	meditation centre	
ka-ma-htan' kyaung'daik	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ကျောင်း ဝိုင်း	meditation centre (cluster)	
ka-ma-htan' pei' thi	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ပေး သုတေသန	give a meditation object (method)	
ka-ma-htan' shu' thi	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ရှု သုတေသန	meditate ('observe the meditation objects')	
ka-ma-htan' si' hpyan' thi	ကမ္မတ္တနာ စိတ်ဖြတ်သုတေသန	objects of meditation	
ka-ma-htan' ta-ya'	ကမ္မတ္တနာ တရား	meditation teaching	
ka-ma-htan' taung' thi	ကမ္မတ္တနာ တောင်း သုတေသန	request a meditation object	
ka-ma-htan' yeik-tha	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ဝိပဿနာ	meditation centre	
ka-ma-htan'pya'nei thaw' hta-na	ကမ္မတ္တနာ ပျာဏိတော ဌာန	a centre where meditation is taught	
ka-ma-wa	ကမ္မတ္တ	ritual ordination	kammavācam
ka-ma-wa hsa-ya-daw	ကမ္မတ္တ ဆရာတော်	monk responsible for reading the ritual texts at the monastic ordination	
ka-ma-wa sa hpat thi	ကမ္မတ္တ စာ ဟုတ်သုတေသန	read ritual texts	
Ka-tha-pa'	ကထာပု	a monk disciple of the Buddha	Kassapa
ka-thaing' shu' thi	ကထာစာ ရှု သုတေသန	observe the entirety (meditation)	
ka-thin' thin-gan'	ကထာစာ စိတ်ဖြတ်သုတေသန		
Ka-thit-waing Hs.	ကထာစာ ဝိပဿနာ	name of a monk	
Ka-thit-waing Hsa-ya-daw hpa-ya'gyi' i hlei-rok-pat-ti' nnin' ta-ya'daw-mya'	ကထာစာ ဝိပဿနာ ဟောပြောသော ဝိပဿနာ	biography of a monk	
ka-wei	ကဝေ	sorcerer	
Ka-wein-da', U'	ကဝေဠ	name of a monk	
Ka-wi', U'	ဦး ကဝိ	name of a monk	
ka-ya nu'pat-tha-na	ကယာ နုပတ္တနာ	contemplation on the body	kāya nupassanā
kan	ကံ	action and its fruit	kamma
Kan-da'nya, A-shin	ကံသာနာ အရှင်	name of a monk	
Kan-hse-law' Monastery Hs.	ကံဆေးလော့ မဏ္ဍိတကျောင်း	name of a monk	
Kan'thon-zin' Hs.	ကံဆေး ဝိပဿနာ	name of a monk	
Kan Baw, (U')	ဦး ကံဘော်	name of a man	
kan hpyat lan'	ကံဖြတ်လမ်း	an avenue to short-cutting fate	
kat thi	ကတ သုတေသန	to offer to the monks	

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kat-pl-ya'	ကပ္ပလ	someone who looks after the needs of monks	kappiya
Kaw'ka-lok Ywa	ကော့ ကလော့ဝ်	name of a village	
Kaw'tha-la', U'	န: ကော့သလ	name of a monk	
Kaw'thi'ta', U'	န: ကော့သိတ	name of a monk	
Kaw'wi'da', (U')	န: ကော့ဝိဒ	name of a man	
Kaw'za hnit	ကော့သ နှစ်	Burmese year	
Kaw'za thek-ka-yit	ကော့သ သက္ကရာဇ်	Current era (Burmese calendar)	
Kei-la-tha' (Ga-na'wa-sa-ka' Da-ma-sa-ni'ya' Ba-than-da-ra' A-shin)	ကောလီဝေ ဝေဇာနိယ သမ္ဘိဒ္ဓိ သက္ကရာဇ် ကောလိသ	name of a monk	
Kei-la-tha' Mountain	ကောလိသ မြေ	name of a mountain	
Kei-la-tha', U'	န: ကောလိသ	name of a monk	
Kei-tha-ra', Hs. U'	သုတေသန: ကော့သလ	name of a monk	
Kei-ti', U'	န: ကိတ္တိ	name of a monk	
ki'lei-tha ma pe bu'	ကိလေ သာမဿပဿန:	cannot destroy the defilements	
Kin', Hsa-ya	ဆရာ ကင်:	name of a nun	
Kin'ban'kyau'gaing'dauk Hs	ကင်: ပုဂံ: ကျောင်း ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ: ကော့သလ သုတေသန	name of a monk	
Kin'law'ya' Hs. U' Hxei-ma	ကင်: ကော့သလ သုတေသန: ကော့သ	name of a monk	
Ko (title: see name)	ကို	elder brother (ဒါနိ/ကိုကို)	
Ko-yei'at-hlok-pat-ti'	ကိုယ်ရေး အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ	autobiography	
ko-yin	ကိုရင်	novice	
ko-yin-gyi'	ကိုရင်ကြီး	novice (old)	
ko-yin ku-hwet	ကိုရင် ကုမ္မာ	disrobed novice	
Ko'gan-pyo'	ကိုး ခန်း ပျဉ်	title of a verse	
Ko'na-win, (U')	န: ကို: နဝင်း	name of a man	
Kon'baung-zat	ကုန်း ကော့သလ သမ္ဘိဒ္ဓိ	title of a chronicle	
Ma-ha-ya-za-win-daw-gyi'	ကော့သလ		
Kon'baung hkit	ကုန်း ကော့သလ	period of the Kon'baung dynasty	
Ku'tha-la', (U') / (sai't)	(sai't)(န) ကုသလ	name of a man/kuh	
ku'tho	ကုသိုလ်	merit	kusala
Ku'wei-na'	ကုသေက	name of a deity	
ku pan' thi	ကုသုသန	memorious donation	
Kun'gyan-gon'myo'	ကုန်းကြီး ကျောင်းကြီး	name of a town	
Kyaik-hti'yo' Mountain	ကျိပ်ကတီး ဝိ: ကော့သလ	name of a mountain	
Kyaik-Mo-ma-yan'cho Hs.	ကျိပ်ကတီး ပုဂံ: သုတေသန: ကော့သလ	name of a monk	
Kyan-zit-tha'	ကျိပ်စစ်သား	name of a king	
Kyan, (Hsa-ya)	ဆရာ ကြီး	name of a man	
Kyauk-hse	ကျောက်ဆည်	name of a town	
kyau'ng	ကျွေး	cat	
Kyaung-ban' Hs.	ကျွေး (ပုဂံ): သုတေသန	name of a monk	
kyau'ng	ကျောင်း	school, monastery	
kyau'ng da-ga	ကျောင်း သာမဏ	donor of a monastery (male)	

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kyauṅ'da-ga-ma'	ကျောင်းသမား	donor of a monastery (female)	
kyauṅ'daḥ	ကျောင်းတိုက်	cluster of monasteries	
Kyauṅ'daw-ya Shwei-gyi, Kyauṅ'	ကျောင်းသော ဗုဒ္ဓကျော်ကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
Kyau-aung-san-ha' Hs.	ကျော်အောင်စံအောင်ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
kyei'zu' shin	ကျေးဇူးရှင်	benefactor	
Kyei'zu'daw-yin	ကျေးဇူးတော်ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	title of a monk biography	
Nyaung-lun'law'ya' Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' i htei-rok-pat-ti' ^{a-ya' hsin'}	ရှေးလွင်တော်လှည့်ဆရာတော်ကျေးဇူးတော်စံလေ့ရှိခဲ့သောကျော်လှည့်တော်တရားတော်စာတမ်းတမ်း		
Nyaung-lun'law'ya' ta-ya'a'ntok-zin	ကျေးဇူးတော်စံလေ့ရှိခဲ့သောကျော်လှည့်တော်တရားတော်စာတမ်းတမ်း		
Kyei'zu'shin mu-la' Min'gun' Zei-da-wun	ကျေးဇူးရှင်မုလားမင်းကွန်းဒေါက်တာ	biography of a monk	
Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' i htei-rok-pat-ti'	ရှေးလွင်တော်လှည့်ဆရာတော်ကျေးဇူးတော်စံလေ့ရှိခဲ့သောကျော်လှည့်တော်တရားတော်စာတမ်းတမ်း		
Kyi-wun-mo'hta' Hs.	ကျိဝုန်မိုးတီးဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Kyi'the'lei'dak	ကျိတီးလေးတော်ဆရာတော်ကျေးဇူးတော်	name of a monk	
Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' (Shwei-daung Myo)	(ရှေးတောင်မြို့)		
Kyi, Hs. U'	ဆရာတော်မိုးကြည်	name of a monk	
Kyu-nok i sun'sa'gan'	ကျွန်၏စွန့်စားခန်း	title of a historical record type biography	
kyun-daw	ကျွန်တော်	'I' (male speaker, also female in Mandalay)	
Kywet, (Hsa-ya)	ဆရာကြီး	name of a man	
lan'hnyun na-ya-ka'	လမ်းညွှန်နာမက	teacher showing the way	
lat	လတ်	middle	
law'ba'	လောဘ	greed	lobha
law'bet	လောဘကပ်	duty day scarf	
law'bet tin thi	လောဘကပ်တင်သည့်	wear the duty day scarf	
law'ka' ni-di'	လောကနိဝိ	genre of literature on human conduct	loka nī
Law'ka'byu-ha'yan'	လောကဗျူဟာကျမ်း	title of an account of the Toungoo court procedure	
law'ki min-ga-la	လောကီမင်္ဂလာ	auspiciousness (worldly)	loki mangala
law'ki pyin-nya	လောကီပညာ	worldly knowledge	loki pañña
law'ki tha-tha-na	လောကီသာသနာ	worldly Buddhism	loki sāsana
law'ki tha-tha-na pyu' th	လောကီသာသနာဖြူသည့်	doing worldly missionary work	
law'ki weik-za	လောကီဝိဇ္ဇာ	worldly sage	loki vijā (gāṇa)
law'kot-ta-ra	လောကုတ္တရာ	otherworldiness	lokuttara
law'kot-ta-ra min-ga-la	လောကုတ္တရာမင်္ဂလာ	auspiciousness (otherworldly)	lokuttara mangala
law'kot-ta-ra pyin-nya	လောကုတ္တရာပညာ	otherworldly knowledge	lokuttara pañña
law'kot-ta-ra tha-tha-na	လောကုတ္တရာသာသနာ	otherworldly religion	lokuttara sāsana
law'kot-ta-ra weik-za	လောကုတ္တရာဝိဇ္ဇာ	otherworldly sage	lokuttara vijā (gāṇa)
le	လယ်	field	
Le-di di-pa-ni baung'gyok	လယ်ဒီဒီပနီပေါင်းသုံး	collected works of Le-di Hsa-ya-daw	
Le-di gan-da-win-gyaw-mya' tha-maing'	လယ်ဒီဂဏ္ဍဝင်ကျော်စွာသိင်္ဂီ	title of a book	
Le-di Hsa-ya-daw	လယ်ဒီဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Le-di Hsa-ya-daw Ma-ha-htei-myat-gyi' i ma-ha-htei-rok-pat-ti' ga'hta	လယ်ဒီဆရာတော်မဟာမောင်မြတ်ကျော်၏မဟာစံလေ့ရှိခဲ့သော	title of a book	
le-tha-ma'	လယ်သမား	farmer	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
lei	လေး	small	
Lei', (U')	ဦး လေး	mode of address of an older person (uncle)	
Lei ne' A-tu	လေး နိ၊ အတွဲ	modern style biography	
lein-ga' tha-tha-na	လှိုင် ကာသမ္ဘာ	time during which the monk's requisites disappear	
Lek-hka-na', U'	ဦး လှိုင် က	name of a monk	
let-htauk-yon-paing	လက်ထောက် ဦး နိုင်	assistant station master	
Let-htauk Ngwei-sa-yin'min'gyi'	လက်ထောက် ငွေတရား ဝင်း ဦး	deputy accountant general	
let-twei'tha-ma'	လက်တွေ့ သဘော	practical person	
lon-gyi	လူ သူဌ်	male dress	
lu	လူ	human	
lu-daw lu-kaung'	လူ တော် လူ တော်	bright and skilful first, good and holy second	
lu-thei lu-hpyit	လူ သေ လူ ဖွစ်	people die and are reborn as people	
lu-ya-win	လူ ဂု ဝင်	sociable	
lu baung	လူ တောင်	human society	
lu baung hma' htwei thi	လူ တောင် မှ ထွက်သွား	exit from human society (become a monk)	
lu hpon'gyi'	လူ ဘုန်း ဦး	human monk	
lu na-mi	လူ နာမည်	human name	
Lun' Baw, (U')	ဦး လွန်း တော်	name of a man	
Ma-ga-da'	မဂဓ	dialect spoken by the Buddha, Pali & geyye	Magadha
ma-gaik	မင်္ဂလ	crown	
Ma-ha-bo gaing'	မဟာ ဗိုလ် ဦး တော်	name of a monastic sect	
Ma-ha-bok-da'gaw'tha'	မဟာ ဗုဒ္ဓ သောသ	name of famous monk author	
Ma-ha-bok-da'gaw'thok-pat-ti'	မဟာ ဗုဒ္ဓ သောသ ဗုဒ္ဓ ဦး	a biography	
Ma-ha-bok-da'win	မဟာ ဗုဒ္ဓ ဝင်	Buddha biography (history)	Mahābuddha vamsa
Ma-ha-gi-ni'	မဟာ ဂိရိ	Burmese house spirit	
Ma-ha-hswei	မဟာ ဧဝ္ဗ	an author	
Ma-ha-hswei Ma-ha-hswei	မဟာ ဧဝ္ဗ ဇာတ် မဟာ ဧဝ္ဗ	title of a ^{author} biography	
Ma-ha-htai	မဟာ ဧဝ္ဗ ဝင်	senior monk of over 20 years	mahānēra
Ma-ha-ka-tha-pa', (A-shin)	ဘုရင် မဟာ ကာသမ္ဘာ	name of a monk	Mahākassapa
Ma-ha-mei-din ba-tha	မဟာ မေတ္တာ သာသနာ	Islam	
Ma-ha-myaing Monastery	မဟာ မြိုင် ကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
Ma-ha-si Hs.	မဟာ စိန် အရာတော်	name of a monk	
Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi'	မဟာ စိန် အရာတော် ဘုန်း ဦး	title of a book	
hpyei-fya'daw-mu-daw	မြေပေါ် တော် မှု တော် အတွဲ သာသနာ		
ba-wa'pyat-tha-na wun-na'gyaw	ဝဏ္ဏ ကျောင်း ဝင်း အတွဲ ဘုန်း ဦး မြိုင် ဧဝ္ဗ		
ntin Dau-ka U' Myin' Hswei	ကျောင်း တော် သာသနာ		
shauk-Ma'thi			
Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' htei-rok-pat-ti'	မဟာ စိန် အရာတော် ဘုန်း ဦး (ဦး) စိန် စော ဗုဒ္ဓ ဦး	title of a monk biography	
Ma-ha-si pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na win	မဟာ စိန် ပဋိ ပတ္တိ သာသနာ ဝင်	history of the Ma-ha-si practice tradition	
Ma-ha-si Tha-tha-na' Kitei-thi	မဟာ စိန် သာသနာ ဘုန်း တော် ဦး	title of a book	
A-hpwe' hnit-pat-te a-si-yin-hkan-sa	အမှတ် ၅၀၀ မှတ်တမ်း အတွဲ ၂၆၀		
Ma-ha-tha-di'pa-hita-na' thok	မဟာ သမ္မာပဒ ဘုန်း ဦး	name of a sutta	Mahānāḥiṇīpattakhaṇa sūtra
Ma-ha-tha-di'pa-hitan' thok neik-tha-ya'	မဟာ သမ္မာပဒ ဘုန်း ဦး သာသနာ	name of a sutta (Pali & Burmese)	Mahānāḥiṇīpattakhaṇa sūtra ninnaya

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
Ma-ha-tha-ma-ya' thok	မာဟာသမာယာစာ	title of a sutta	mahāsamaya sūta
Ma-ha-wi-thok-da-ra-ma'daik	မာဟာဝိသုဒ္ဓိရာမာဓိက	monastic complex	
Ma-ha-wi-thu'da-ra-ma' Hsa-ya-daw, (Ek-ga'ma-ha-pen-di'ta) (later A-bi'da'za' Ma-ha-ra-ha'gu'ru')	မာဟာဝိသုဒ္ဓိရာမာဓိက အဓိကပုဂ္ဂိုလ် (ဇနနိကဝိသုဒ္ဓိရာမာဓိက)	name of a monk	
Ma-ha-wi-thu'da-ra-ma' Ye'sa-gyo Hs.	မာဟာဝိသုဒ္ဓိရာမာဓိက ယောကျာ်း	name of a monk	
ma-ha win	မာဟာဝိ	lineage of Buddha's relatives	mahā vamsa
Ma-ha-ya-za-win-gyi'	မာဟာရာဇာဝိဇယ	title of a chronicle	mahā rāja vamsa
Ma-ha Baw'di'	မာဟာဗောဓိ	name of a meditation centre	
Ma-ha Baw'di' Wl'pat-tha-na Yaw'g' Ka-ma-tan'daik tha-maing'	မာဟာဗောဓိ ဝိပဿနာ ယောကျာ်း ကာမာတဏှာဓိက စာမိယ	history of a meditation centre	
Ma-ha Da-ma'pa-la' Kyaung'	မာဟာဓမ္မာပာလာကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
ma-ha gan-da-ri weik-za	မာဟာဂန္ဓာရိဝေဇာ	sage with supernatural knowledge (incl. WM)	mahagandhāgandhārī vijā (gāthā)
Ma-ha Gan-da-yon	မာဟာဂန္ဓာရိ	name of a monastery	
ma-ha ni'bat	မာဟာနိပါတ်	a group of Buddha birth stories	
Ma-haw'tha-da' zat	မာဟာသမ္ဘာဇာတိ	a Buddha birth story	Mahāvastu
Ma-hein-da'ma-hiei, (A-shin)	မာဟိန္ဒာမာဟိန္ဒ	name of a monk	
Ma-la-lin-ka-ra'	မာလာလိန္ကာရာ	a Buddha biography	Mahālaṅkāra
Ma-la-yi, (Daw)	မာလာယိ (သော)	name of a nun	
Ma-nu-ha Min'	မာနုဟာမိန်	name of a king	
Ma-so'yein Hsa-ya-daw	မာဆွေယိန္ဒာယောသော	name of a monk	
Ma-u-hel'ya Hs. U' Na-ra-da'	မာဟိန္ဒာယောသော (ဦး နာရာဇာ)	name of a monk	
Ma-yu-me'	မာယုမေ	a female teacher	
Ma' Ma' Gyi', (Daw)	မာမာဂျိ (သော)	name of a woman	
ma kaung' yin kyaung' go po'	မာကောင့် ယိန်ကျောင်း ကို ပို	if no good send to the monastery	
man-dan	မာနုဓာန	sacred words, charm, spell	mantra
Man-gyi'taw'ya' Kyaung'	မာနုဓာန ကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
Man-kyi'gan Hsa-ya-daw U' Na-ra-da'	မာနုဓာန ကျောင်း ဦး နာရာဇာ	name of a monk	
man-ta-ra' let-hpwa'	မာနုဓာန လက်ဖျော့	amulets under spells	
man'dat	မာနုဓာန	feasting tent, marquee	mandapa
Mauk-ga-lan	မောက္ခဂါလန်	a disciple of the Buddha	Moggallāna
Mauk-ga-lan neik'tha-ya'	မောက္ခဂါလန် နိက္ခိယာ	title of a mixed Burmese-Pali text	Moggallāna nissāya
Mauk-ga-li'pok-ta'leik-tha	မောက္ခဂါလန် ပုပ္ဖိယာ	a disciple of the Buddha	Tissa Moggalliputta
Maung (title: see name)	မောင့်	younger brother	
Maung'ma'ya Hs.	မောင့် မာယာ	name of a monk	
Maung'daung-dak	မောင့် သောဓိက	name of a monastic cluster	
Maung Hmaing', (Mr.)	မောင့် မောင်	title of a novel	
Maung Thein' Tin Ma' Thein' Shin wut-htu'	မောင် သိန်း တင် မောင် သိန်း သိန်း ဝတ္ထု	title of a novel	
Maung Yin Maung Ma Me Ma	မောင် ယိန် မောင် မာမေမာ	title of an early modern novel	
Maw-daw'myin-tha Pagoda	မောသောမြိန်သာစာစာ	name of a pagoda	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
maw-gun* (or hmaw-gun*)	မော့ဂွန်:	historical records	
maw'ha'	မော့ဟ	ignorance	moha
maw hsa-ya	မော့ဆာယ	a kind of sorcerer	
me-daw	မေသော	title of sponsor of an ordination, mother of royalty	
Me'htu' Hsa-ya-daw	မေထွာဆာယသော	name of a monk	
Me Kin'	မေကင်:	name of a nun	
Me Nat Pei', Hsa-ya	မေနေပိဆာယ	name of a nun	
Mei Myo'	မေမြို့	name of a town	
meik-hsa deik-hi'	မေခွဲဒိက္ခိ	wrongviewed	micchā-ditthi
meik-hsa deik-hi' ku-myo'	မေခွဲဒိက္ခိကုမျိုး	wrongviewed person	
meik-hswel	မေဝဲလ်	friend	
Meik-ti'la Hpon'daw-gyi' U' Kei-tha-ra'	မေတိလာဖွဲ့သောဂွီယူကျီထာရာ	name of a monk	
mein' ma' hpa'win	မိန်းမာဖော်ဝိ	puberty of girls	
Mek-hka'hla-ra-ma' Monastery	မေခွဲခွာရာမာတိုက်	name of a monastery	
mek-hpo	မေအ်ပု	path and fruition	magga-chala
mek-hpo neik-ban	မေအ်ပုနေပုဂံ	path and fruition of enlightenment	magga-chala nibbāna
mek-nyan	မေဂ်နာ	knowledge of the path	magga ñāṇam
mi' ba-dei-tha	မီးပဒေသာ	chandelier	
Mi'ya-ha' Ok-chok-yei' A-hpwe'	မီးယားဟာအ်ခွဲအ်ကျီအ်အ်ပွဲ	Railways Board	
mi'hsaing ba'hsang nai	မီးဆိုင်ပဆိုင်နာ	spirit from mother's and father's side	
mi'yo'hpa-la bok-da'ba-tha	မီးယိုးပဟာပုဂံသော	parentally received Budohendom	
min-ga-la	မင်ဂလာ	auspiciousness	mangala
Min-ga-la-daik	မင်ဂလာတိုက်	name of a monastic cluster	
Min' Yu' Wei	မင်းယူဝေ	name of an author	
min' zet	မင်းဆက်	royal lineage	
Min'bu'	မင်းပု:	name of a town	
Min'don'	မင်းတုံ:	name of a king	
Min'gun' Hsa-ya-daw (Tha-hion' Zai-da-wun)	မင်းဂွန်ဆာယသော (သောဆောဝိ)	name of a monk	
Min'thin Hs.	မင်းထင်ဆာယသော	name of a monk	
Min'o Hs. Shin Gu'na'	မင်းအ်ဆာယသောရှင်ဂွာ	name of a monk	
min'tha'	မင်းသား:	prince	
Mo'gok Hsa-ya-daw	မိုးဂုတ်ဆာယသော	name of a monk	
Mo'gok Hsa-ya-daw hpa-ya'gyi' i hsei-rok-pat-ti'	မိုးဂုတ်ဆာယသောဆာယာဂွီအ်အ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲ	biography of a monk	
Mo'gok Wi'pat-tha-na-pyan'pwa'yei' A-hpwe'	မိုးဂုတ်အ်ပတ်သောနာပျာပွဲအ်အ်ပွဲ	Mo'gok WM Propagation Society	
Mo'hnyin' hsei-rok-pat-ti' nyun'baung'	မိုးဂွီအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲ	biography of the Mo'hnyin' Hs.	
Mo'hnyin' Ma-ha-hai-ra-pa-dan	မိုးဂွီအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲအ်ခွဲ		
Mo'hnyin Hsa-ya-daw	မိုးဂွီဆာယသော	name of a monk	
Mo'nan-gon' Hs.	မိုးနာဂွန်ဆာယသော	name of a monk	
Mon-ywa myo'	မုဒ်မြို့	name of a town	
Mon-ywei' Hsa-ya-daw	မုဒ်ဆာယသော	name of a monk	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
mu-la'	မူလ	original	mūla
mu-la' ba-tha	မူလ မာဏ	original language	mūla bhāsā
Mu-la' Min'gun ^a Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya-gyi ^a	မူလသား: ကွန်း: ဘုရားမောင် ဟုခေါ်	name of a monk	
Mu-la' ti-ka	မူလ ခို ကာ	original commentary (first commentary by Ananda)	
Mu-la' bok-da-win wut-hu' kyan ^a	မူလ ဗုဒ္ဓ ဝင် ဝတ္ထု ကျမ်း	biography of the Buddha	
Mya' Thwin ^a , (Daw)	မိယာ် တွင် ဟွိုင်	name of a woman	
Mya' Zai-di	မြေဝေဝီ	name of a pagoda	
Mya'daung' nyo	မြေသင်း: ညို	name of an author	
Mya'tha-beik Hsa-ya-daw	မြေသစ် ဗိုလ် ဘုရားမောင်	name of a monk	
Myan-ma	မြန်မာ	Burma	
Myan-ma-do' ye' shin-byu' tha-maing ^a lei'la-gyek	မြန်မာ ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ နှင့် နိဗ္ဗာန်သမိုင်း: မေတ္တာ ချမ်း	study of our Burmese novitiation history	
Myan-ma-pyin-nya-shi'gyi' mya' at-hlok-pat-ti'	မြန်မာ ပျက် နှစ် ဇွဲ: မှား: အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ	title of a modern typebiography	
Myan-ma-sa Hla-na'	မြန်မာ စာ ဌာန	Department of Burmese Literature	
Myan-ma-wun-gyi' hmu'gyi' mya' at-hlok-pat-ti'	မြန်မာ ဝန်ထမ်း: မူလ: မှား: အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ	title of a biography	
Myan-ma' da-lei' shin-byu' min-nga-la	မြန်မာ ဓမ္မ ဝန်ထမ်း ဝန်ထမ်း	ceremonial of Burmese novitiation	
Myan-ma' swe-zon kyan ^a	မြန်မာ ဓမ္မ ဝန်ထမ်း:	Burmese encyclopaedia	
Myan-ma'a-lin ^a Magazine	မြန်မာ အလင်း: မဂ္ဂဇင်း	title of a magazine	
Myan-ma'gon-zaung-pok-ko-nu' Hsa-ya-gyi' U' Ba' hkin at-hlok-pat-ti' nnin' tha-tha-na-pyu' lok-ngan' mya'	မြန်မာ ဂုဏ်သိက္ခာ ဘုရားမောင်: ဦး: ကခင် အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ နှင့် သာသနာ့ဇာတိ ဝန်ထမ်း: မှား:	The biography and missionary works of Burma's pride, teacher U' Ba' Hkin	
Myan-ma a-bi'dan a-kyin'gyok	မြန်မာ အဘိဓာန် က ကျမ်း: ချမ်း	The concise Burmese dictionary	
Myan-ma A-lin ^a U' Tin	မြန်မာ အလင်း: ဦး: တင်	name of a man	
Myan-ma at-hlok-pat-ti' tha-maing ^a	မြန်မာ အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ သမိုင်း	history of Burmese biography	
myan-ma naing-ngan	မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံ	Burma	
Myan-ma Naing-ngan-daw Sa-yin' sit-gyok	မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံ မောင် စာရင်း: စစ် ချမ်း	State Auditor	
Myan-ma Naing-ngan-daw ya-han' da an'ya-mya' i hteik-rok-pat-ti' pa-d' oal-ti' tha-tha-na-win-kyan ^a	မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံ: မောင် ဂုဏ်သိက္ခာ အချမ်း မှား: စစ်: စာရင်းပဋိပတ္တိ ပဋိပတ္တိ သာသနာ့ဝန်ထမ်း:	title of a book	
Myan-ma Naing-ngan gan-da-win pok-ko-gyaw-mya' at-nlok-pat-ti'	မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံ: ဂဏန်း ဝန်ထမ်း မှား: အတ္ထုပ္ပတ္တိ	title of a collection of biographies	
Myan-ma Naing-ngan pa-di' pat-ti' tha-tha-na-win: ya-han' da nnin' pok-ko htu' mya'	မြန်မာ နိုင်ငံ: ပဋိပတ္တိ သာသနာ့ ဝန်ထမ်း နှင့် ဗုဒ္ဓ: မှား:		
Myat-bok-da' sa-zin	မြတ် ဗုဒ္ဓ စာရင်း	a publication series	
Myat-bok-da' dei-tha-na	မြတ် ဗုဒ္ဓ မေတ္တာ	title of a book	
Myat Kyaw, (U')	ဦး: မြတ် မောင်	name of a man	
Myat Thein ^a Htun ^a , (Hsa-ya-daw U')	ဘုရားမောင် ဦး: မြတ် သိန်း: ချမ်း:	name of a layman (monk-name)	
Myaung-gyi' Hsa-ya-daw U' A-sa-ra'	မြောင်း: မြီး: ဘုရားမောင် ဦး: က ဝန်ထမ်း	name of a monk	
myet-hna-hpyu lu-myo ^a	မျက်နှာဖြူ လူ မျိုး:	Europeans (white faced people)	
Myin-tin-daik Monastery	မြိုင် တင် ချိန်	name of a monastery	

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
Myin ³ gyan-myo ³ Kyel ³ zu ³ shin Sun ³ lun ³ gu ³ kyau ³ ng ³ Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya ³ gyi ³ i Hsi-rok-pat-ti ³ a-kyu ³ ng ³ ta-ya ³ daw-mya ³ (ta-ya ³ a ³ htok-ni ³)	မြင်းခြံမြို့ကျေးဇူးရှင် ဂွဏ်လှိုင် သာသနာ့ဦးစီး ဦးစီးဌာန အတွက် စာတမ်း စာတမ်း အား အစီအစဉ်	biography of the Sun ³ lun ³ Hs. and his hitherto	
Myin ³ gyan-myo ³ kyel ³ zu ³ shin Sun ³ lun ³ gu ³ kyau ³ ng ³ Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya ³ gyi ³ i tha-ra-ni ³ ya ³ ka-hla	မြင်းခြံမြို့ကျေးဇူးရှင် ဂွဏ်လှိုင် သာသနာ့ဦးစီး ဦးစီးဌာန အတွက် စာတမ်း	title of a book	
Myin ³ Hswei, (Wun-na ³ gyaw-tin Dr. U)	ဝဏ္ဏလှိုင် စာရေးဆရာမ ဦးစီး	name of a man	
Myin ³ Sein, U ³	ဦးစီး ဦးစီး	name of a man	
Myit ³ kyi ³ na ³	မြစ်ကြီးနား	name of a town	
myit ³ ta	မြတ်တော်	loving kindness	mettā
myit ³ ta ba-wa-na pwa ³ thi	မြတ်တော် အတတ် ပညာ သင်	practice loving kindness meditation	
myit ³ ta dat	မြတ်တော် ဝါဒ	loving kindness constituent element	mettā dhātu
myit ³ ta ka-ma-hlan ³	မြတ်တော် ကမ္မဋ္ဌာန်း	loving kindness meditation	mettā kammattāna
Myit ³ tha ³	မြစ်သာ	place name	
Myit ³ zi ³ ma ³ ntei	မြစ်ကြီးမင်း	senior monk of between 10-20 rainy seasons	
Myit ³ zu, U ³	မြစ်ဦး	name of a monk	
Myo ³ his ³ Myo ³	မြို့မမြို့	name of a town	
myo ³ thu ³ gyi ³	မြို့သူကြီး	headman	
Na ³ ga ³ , U ³	ဦးနဂါး	name of a monk	
na ³ me	နာမ	name	
Na ³ ra ³ da ³ , U ³	ဦးနာရဒ	name of a monk	
Na ³ ra ³ da ³ zal	နာရဒ ဇာတိ	title of a Buddha birth story	Narada jātaka
Na ³ ra ³ pa ³ ti ³ si ³ thu	နာရပတိစိန္တ	name of a king	
Na ³ rein ³ da ³ , U ³	ဦးရေသီ	name of a monk	
na ³ win ³ ga ³ thi ³ la ³	နဝရမ္မိ	the nine precepts	navanga sila
na ³ ya ³ ka ³ hsa ³ ya ³ daw	နာယက သာသနာ့ဦးစီး	head teacher (na ³)	
na ³ yon	နယုန်	name of a Burmese lunar month (May-June)	
na ³ tha ³ min ³ ga ³ ta	နားသင်္ခါနာ	ear piercing ceremony	
Naing ³ ngan ³ daw Bok ³ da ³ Tha ³ tha ³ na ³ A ³ hpwe ³ (abbrev. NBTA)	နိုင်ငံရေးသမား ဦးစီး ဦးစီး	National Buddhist Association (Govt. Org.)	
naing ³ ngan ³ daw si ³ owa ³ yei ³	နိုင်ငံရေး ဦးစီး ဦးစီး	national economy	
Naing ³ ngan ³ gya ³ Bok ³ da ³ ba ³ tha ³ tha ³ tha ³ na ³ pyu ³ A ³ thin ³ gyi ³	နိုင်ငံရေး သမား သမား သမား သမား	Foreign Missionary Society	
naing ³ ngan ³ tha ³ maing ³ hso ³ thi ³ hma ³ naing ³ ngan ³ i al ³ htok ³ pat ³ ti ³ (wa) shei ³ haung ³ thnaung ³ pyit ³ do ³ go ...	နိုင်ငံရေး သမား သမား သမား သမား (သို့) ရှေးဟောင်း သမား သမား သမား သမား မှတ်တမ်း သမား သမား သမား သမား	'as for the history of a country's al ³ htok ³ pat ³ ti ³ ' (wa) past happenings'	
Naing ³ ngan ³ yei ³ hta ³ na ³	နိုင်ငံရေး ဦးစီး	Department of Politics	
Nan ³ da ³ dei ³ wi	နန္ဒာဒေဝီ	name of a queen	
Nan ³ da ³ , Hs. U ³	သာသနာ့ဦးစီး	name of a monk	
Nan ³ di ³ ya ³ Hs.	နန္ဒိယာသာသနာ့ဦးစီး	name of a monk	
Nan ³ yaw ³ Hs. U ³ Za ³ ga ³ ra ³	နန္ဒယာသာသနာ့ဦးစီး	name of a monk	
Nan ³ U ³ Dalk	နန်းဦးစီး	name of a monastic cluster	
nat	နတ်	spirit	
nat ³ zin ³ pya ³ th	နတ်ဝင်္ကဏ်	show the spirit shell	

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nat hpan' thi	နတ် ဘက်: သန့်	be possessed by a spirit	
nat kat thi	နတ် ကပ် သန့်	possessed by a spirit	
nat pu' thi	နတ် ပု: သန့်	possessed by a spirit	
nat win thi	နတ် ဝါ သန့်	possessed by a spirit	
Nei-ma-la'	နိမ္မာ န	name of a monk	
Nei-mi' zat	နိမ္မိ ဝိဇာတ်	a Buddha birth story	Nimi jātaka
Nei-yein-da', U'	နိ: နိရိဒ္ဓ	name of a monk	
nei' sa-thin, nya' ta-ya' htaing'	နိ: စာသင်, နိ စာရ: ထိုင်	study during the day, meditate at night	
neik-ban	နိဗ္ဗာန်	cessation of being, enlightenment	nibbāna
neik-ban dat	နိဗ္ဗာန် ဓါတ်	enlightenment element	nibbāna dhātu
neik-hka-ma'	နိက္ခယ	renunciation	nikkhamana
neik-tha-ya'	နိ သမ ဝ	Pali-Burmese mixed	nissaya
neik-thil	နိ သင်	not lying down to sleep	nesagikāṅga
Nein-ma-la', (Thu'mei-da Hsa-ya-daw U')	နိဗ္ဗာန် (သု ဝေဝါ ဆာယော)	name of a monk	
Nek-hkat-ta'pa-reik-hsei-da'	နက္ခတ္တ ပရိစ္ဆေဒ	determinations of planetary constellations (astrology)	
nga' ba' thi-la'	ငါ: ဝါ: သီလ	the five precepts	
Ngwei-sa-yin' hnin' Sa-yin'sit-ha-na' Hnyun'gya'yei'wun	ငွေ စာရင်း ခွဲစိတ် စာရင်း: ဝန်ကြီး ဝန် ကြီး: ငွေ: စို	Director of the Accountant and Auditor's Dept.	
Ngwei-sa-yin'kaing A-ya-shi'	ငွေ စာရင်း: ကိုင် အမှု ဦး	accounts officer	
Ngwei-sa-yin'min'gyi'yon' Wipat-tha-na-dai-pyin-nya A-hpwe'	ငွေ စာရင်း: ဝင်းကြီး ဦး ဝိပဿနာ ဓါတ် ပဉ္စက အဖွဲ့	Accountant-General Vipassana Research Association	
ngwei ba-dai-tha bin	ငွေ ပဒေသာ ပင်	interest bearing account	
ni'bal	နိ ဝါ ဓါ	constituents, Buddha: pali: by: stories	
ni'ke	နိ က န	a collection (of monks or texts)	nikāya
ni'raw'da thit-sa	နိ ရောဂ သတ္တ	the truth of annihilation of suffering	nirodha sacca
Nu', Wun-gyi'gyok haung U'	ဝန်ကြီးချုပ် ဝုဏ်တင် ဦး နု	name of a PM	
nu'pat-tha-na	နု ပဿနာ	contemplation	anupassanā
Nya-na', Shin	နယ နာမ	name of a monk	
Nya-na'sa-gi Hs.	နယ ဝါဒီ အာနန္ဒ	name of a monk	
Nya-na'sa-gi Ma-ha-hlei hteik-rok-pat-ti' hnin' kyan'gyi' kyan'nge pu-zaw-bwe	နယ ဝါဒီ: မဟာစောလံ ထာပုတ္တိ နိဒ္ဒ ကျမ်းကြီး: ကျမ်း: ငယ် နှစ် နှစ်	title of a biography	
Nya-na'wa-ra', Shin	နယ ဝါ	name of a monk	
Nya-na'wun-tha'	နယ ဝိ သ	name of a monk	
Nya'nok-ta-ra', (A-shin)	အရှင် နှစ် နှစ်	name of a monk	
Nya'ta'pa-ni'nya	နိ စာ ပရိ နှစ်	title of a book	
nyan-zin	နယ ဝိ	path of knowledge	
nyan ba-dai-tha	နယ ဝိ ပဒေသာ	a person of versatile intellect	
Nyaung-lun' Hs.	နောင်လွန် ဆာနန္ဒ	name of a monk	
Nyaung-yan' Hsa-ya-daw	နောင် ယင်း: ဆာယော	name of a monk	
Nyaung-yan' Min'ta-ya' A-yei' daw-bon	နောင် ယင်း: ဝင်း: စာရ: အာယော နှစ်	story of a campaign	
Nyei-ya', (Ma-tha-na-bang Hsa-ya-daw U')	သဒ္ဓါ နှစ် အာနန္ဒ နှစ် နှစ်	name of a monk (Ma-tha-na-bang)	
Nyi Nyl, (U')	နိ: နိရိဒ္ဓ	name of a man	
ok-da-zaung' (also ok-za-zaung')	နန္ဒာစော	treasure guardian <i>pirit</i>	

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ok-deik-tha ka'ta-man-tha'	ပုဒ်သံကတမာသ	type of meat to be avoided because killing food for monk personally	
ok-pat-ti'	ပုဒ်တိ	circumstances, events	uppatth
Ok-ta-ma', (U')	ပုဒ်တမာ	name of a monk	
Ok-ta-ra-bi'wun-tha', (A-shin)	ပုဒ်တရာဘိဝံသ	name of a monk	
ok-ta-ra'ku'ru'	ပုဒ်တရာကုရု	north island	
On' Hkaing Monastery, (U')	ပုဒ်အကျိပ်ကျောင်း	name of a monk	
Ok, (Daw)	ဝေဒါဒုဝ	name of a woman	
On', Hsa-ya-gyi' U'	အရှင်ပုဒ်အရှင်	name of a man	
On' Lwin, (U')	ပုဒ်လွင်လွင်	name of a man	
On' Maung, (U')	ပုဒ်မောင်မောင်	name of a man	
On' Thwin, (Daw)	ဝေဒါဒုဝ	name of a woman	
Pa-di' tha-maing' nrin'	ပုဒ်တမိုင်အရှင်	title of a book	
pa-di'sun'yi a-myo'myo'	ပုဒ်တမိုင်အရှင်		
pa-di'bat	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်	Buddhist practice	patipatti
pa-di'pat-ti'	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်	Buddhist practice	patipatti
pa-di'pat-ti' hka	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်	period of Buddhist practice	
pa-di'pat-ti' hsa-ya sin hset	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	lineage of Buddhist practice	
pa-di'pat-ti' sa-bei	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်	Buddhist practice literature	
pa-di'pat-ti' tha-maing'	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်	history of Buddhist practice	
pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်	Buddhist practice	patipatti sāsana
pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na win	ပုဒ်ပုဒ်အရှင်	exponent of Buddhist practice	
pa-di'wei-da'	ပုဒ်ဝေဒါ	penetration	pativedha
pa-di'wei-da' tha-tha-na	ပုဒ်ဝေဒါအရှင်	penetration	pativedha sāsana
Pa-du'ma', (Ma-ha-bo Hsa-ya-daw U')	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	name of a monk	
Pa-hkok-ku-myo'	ပုဒ်အရှင်	name of a town	
Pa-hia-ma' a-kyen	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	title of a book	
gaing'baung'son thin-ga'	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်		
a-si'a-wei' pwe'gyi' nmat-tan'	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်		
pa-hia-wi ka-thaing' shu' de	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	practise earth entirely	
pa-hian'	ပုဒ်အရှင်	cause	patthānam
pa-hian'zet	ပုဒ်အရှင်	relationship of cause and effect	
Pa-li' Hsa-ya-gyi' U' Hpyei	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	name of a man	
Pa-li' thet waw'ha-ra' a-bi'dan	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	title of a dictionary	
Pa-li'daw	ပုဒ်အရှင်	the Pali canon	Pāli
Pa-ra-ma', (Hsa-ya-daw U')	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	name of a monk	
Pa-ra-ma' (Sa-cha' Hsa-ya-daw U')	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	name of a monk	
pa-ra-mat	ပုဒ်အရှင်	ultimate truth	
pa-ra-mat-hia'	ပုဒ်အရှင်	ultimate truth	paramattha
pa-ra-mat-hia' beik-hku	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	monk of the ultimate truth	paramattha bhikkhu
pa-ra-mat-hia' pa-ra-mi	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	perfections of the ultimate truth	paramattha pārami
pa-ra-mat-hia' than-ga	ပုဒ်အရှင်အရှင်	monastic order of the ultimate truth	paramattha sangha

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pa-ra-mat-ha' thit-sa	ပရာမတ္ထ သစ္စာ	ultimate truth	paramattha sacca
pa-ra-mi	ပါရမီ	perfections	pāramī
pa-ra-mi shin	ပါရမီရှင်	master of perfections	
pa-ra-zi'ka'	ပါရဇိက	the five injunctions for monks	pā' rājika
pa-reik-hka-ya shit-pe'	ပရိက္ခရာ သုံးပါး	the eight requisites of monks	pankikhāra
pa-rineik-ban ✓	ပရိနိဗ္ဗာန်	complete nibbana	parinibbāna
pa-rineik-ban san thi ✓	ပရိနိဗ္ဗာန် နှစ်သက်	dwell in nibbana	
pa-riyat	ပရိယတ်	scriptural learning	pariyatti
pa-riyat-ti'	ပရိယတ္တိ	scriptural learning	pariyatti
pa-riyat-ti' du-ra' kyaung'	ပရိယတ္တိ ခုရ ကျောင်း	monastery specialising in scriptural learning	
pa-riyat-ti' tha-tha-na	ပရိယတ္တိ သာသနာ	scriptural learning	pariyatti sāsana
pa-riyat-ti' tha-tha-na-win	ပရိယတ္တိ သာသနာ ဝိ	history of scriptural learning	pariyatti sāsana vamsa
Pa-riyat-ti'a-chei-gan hnin'	ပရိယတ္တိ အစဉ်း နှစ် ပရိယတ္တိ နှစ်ပါး	title of a booklet	
Pa-di'pet-ti'a-hpye-hman Sa-dan'	ပါထိပေတ္တိ အာဟိက သာသနာ		
pa-ti'mauk-hka' than-wa'ra' thi-la'	ပါတိမောက္ခ သံဝါဒီ	monastic code of morality	paṭimokkha
pa-ti win	ပါတိဝင်	party member	
pa-raw'hek	ပုရောဟိတ်	wise man (Brahmanic)	purohita
pa-yaw'ga' hsa-ya	ပယောဂ ဆရာ	a medicine man	
pa-yeik	ပရိတ်	spells	panita
pa-yeik yut pwe'	ပရိတ် ဂွတ် ပွဲ	recital of spells	
pa-yeik yut thi	ပရိတ် ဂွတ် သင်္ဂ	recite spells	
pa-ha-me'	ပဌာ	first	pathama
Pa-ha-ma' Hkut-hkaung	ပဌာ ထွန်ဆောင် ဆရာတော် ဂွတ်	title of a monk biography	
Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' a-kyauung'	အာယာသောဝပယာဂျိ အကျွင်း		
pa-ha-ma'gyi'dan	ပဌာ ဂွတ် တန်း	monastic exam (high)	
pa-ha-ma'lat-dan	ပဌာ ဂွတ် တန်း	monastic exam (middle)	
pa-ha-ma'le-dan	ပဌာ ဂွတ် တန်း	monastic exam (low)	
Pa-ha-ma' Myan-ma-mya'do'	ပဌာ ဂွတ် အမျှ တန်း	title of a collection of summary biographies	
Pan-da-wa', U'	ပု: ပဏ္ဍဝ	name of a monk	
Pan-deik-sa', U'	ပု: ပဏ္ဍိပ	name of a monk	
Pan-di'da-ma', U'	ပု: ပဏ္ဍိဝသ	name of a monk	
Pan-di'ta', (A-shin)	ပဏ္ဍိတ ပဏ္ဍိတ	name of a monk	
Pan-di'ta' Shwe-zei-di Hsa-ya-daw	ပဏ္ဍိတ ခွေဇေဝိ သောဝပ	name of a monk	
Pan'daung Hsa-ya-gyi'	ပဏ္ဍ: ခေါင်း ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
pan'thu'ku	ပံ သူ ကူ ခုတ်	refuse-ragman's practice	pamsukūṭika
paw-ra-na'	ပေါရာဏ	archaic term	porāṇa
Paw', (U)	ပု: ပေါ	name of a man	
Pegu Daung'kyauung' Hs.	ပဲခူး ထွန်းကျွင်း ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
pei-za	ပေဇာ	palm-leaf manuscript	
pein-da'bak	ပိဏ္ဍပါတ်	performing alms-round	piṇḍa pāṭikanga
Pi-lat'ket-ywa Hpon'daw-gyi'	ပိလဒေက္ခိယ ဟုတ် သောဂျိ	name of a monk	
pi'ta-ka'	ပိဋက	the Buddhist canonical texts (a division)	piṭaka
pi'ta-ka' thon' bon	ပိဋက နှစ်: ဂွ	the three Buddhist divisions of the Buddhist canon	tipiṭaka
pi'ta-ka'daik	ပိဋက ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ	library of canonical texts	
PI Mo'nin' PI Mo'nin'	ပိဋ: ပု: ရှိ ပိဋ: ပု:	a biography	

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pin' thi	ပိုင် သင်္ဂ	to invite a monk	
pok-ga-fika'	ပုဂ္ဂလိက	private	puggavika
Pok-hsa-ka' Hsa-ya-daw	ပုဂ္ဂိုလ် အရာတော်	a monk who orders, guides, etc. at the stupa	
pok-ko	ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	person	puggalo
Pok-pa' Saw'ra-han'	ပုပ္ဖိ: တေဇာနည်:	name of a stupa	
Pok-pa' taung-ka-lat	ပုပ္ဖိ: တေဇာနည် သာသနာ့ ပြင် အရာတော်	title of a book	
Tha-tha-na-pyu' Hsa-ya-daw U'	ဦး ပုပ္ဖိ: ဝဏ္ဏ သိက္ခိ စာ ပုပ္ဖိ: နှစ် နှစ် နှစ် နှစ် နှစ် နှစ်		
Pa-ra-ma' Wun-na-theik-di'i			
pa-di-pat-ti' kyin'zin mya'			
pon-na'	ပုဏ္ဏား:	Brahmin	
pu-zaw ko' gwe-gyin' hkan yu thi	ပုဏ္ဏား ကို: နှစ် နှစ်: ခံ ပု သင်္ဂ	undergo worship	
pyan' pwa' nei de	ပြန့်ပွား: ပေး ကံ	propagate	
Pyaw-bwe-myo'	ပြေး ဘွယ် (မြို့)	name of a town	
Pyel-daung-zu'	ပြေး တေဇာနည် စု ပြေး အရာတော်	title of a book	
Myan-ma-naing-ngan-daw Bok-da'	စွဲ သာသနာ နှစ် နှစ် အရာတော်		
Tha-tha-na Nok-ga-ha' A-npwe'			
at-hlok-pat-ti' tha-maing'			
Pyi-thu-chit-thaw'	(ပုပ္ဖိ: သူ နှစ် တေဇာနည် အရာတော်)	modern style researched biography	
a-nu'pyin-nya-the-mya'			
pyi'zon ba bi	ပြေး နှစ် နှစ်	'I am full' 'I have enough'	
pyin-nya	ပုပ္ဖိ	knowledge	pañña
Pyin-nya a-in'pya' In-ga-leik	ပုပ္ဖိ အရာတော်: (ပုပ္ဖိ အရာတော် နှစ် နှစ်)	title of a book ('abuda')	
Myan-ma hnit-ta-ya pyak-ga-dein (1242-1342)	နှစ် တေဇာနည် နှစ် (၁၂၄၂-၁၃၄၂)		
Pyin-nya, A-shin	ပုပ္ဖိ ပုပ္ဖိ	name of a monk	
pyin-nya sh' thau-daw-kaung'	ပုပ္ဖိ နှစ် သူ တေဇာနည် တေဇာနည်: ခံ ကံ	'an action which is not reproached by those who have knowledge'	
ma-ke-ya'thaw' a-hmu'	ခံ: တေဇာနည် အရာတော်		
pyin-nyat	ပုပ္ဖိ	nomenclature	paññatti
Pyin'na, aa' m-mu-thay	ပုပ္ဖိ: အရာတော်: တေဇာနည်	name of a monastery	
pyit-sai-ka' bok-da'	ပုပ္ဖိ နှစ် နှစ်	silent Buddha	pacceta buddha
pyit-si'	ပုပ္ဖိ:	things	
pyo'	ပုပ္ဖိ:	poem	
Ra'ha'tha-ra', (Shin) (also: Pyi Hsa-ya-daw)	အရာတော် သာသနာ (အရာတော် သာသနာ)	name of a monk	
Rangoon Hpa-ya'gyi' Hsa-ya-daw	ရန်ကုန် နှစ်: နှစ်: အရာတော်	name of a monk	
Rangoon Zei-di-yin-ga-na'	ရန်ကုန် မြို့: တေဇာနည် အရာတော်	name of an association devoted to scriptural learning	
Pa-n'yat-ti' A-thin'	ပုပ္ဖိ အရာတော်:		
Rei-wa-ta'	ရေဝတ	name of a monk	
sa	စာ	writing	
Sa-du' Bon-mi'ka'	စာ သူ မိတ္တ	name of a monastic sect	
Sa-du' Bon-mi'ka' mek-gin ma'ha tha-di-pa-nan	စာ သူ မိတ္တ အရာတော် အရာတော်	a VM method	
Sa-du' Bon-mi'ka' tha-tha-na-pyu' gaing'win than-ga-daw-mya'	စာ သူ မိတ္တ သာသနာ နှစ် နှစ်: စာ သာသနာ တေဇာနည်	monk exponents of a monastic sect	
sa-du' law'ka'pa-ta' nat min'gyi' lei' ba'	စာ တေဇာနည် အရာတော် အရာတော်: (စာ တေဇာနည်)	the four guardian spirits of the four worlds	
Sa-du' bon-mi'ka' mek-gin tha-tha-na-win tha-maing'	စာ သူ မိတ္တ အရာတော် သာသနာ အရာတော်	history of a monastic sect	
sa-du'da-bu' wa-wa-tan	စာ သာသနာ ဝဏ္ဏ နှစ်	loathsomeness of the four elements	caludhatuvavathana
sa-du'daik-tha kywe' thi	စာ သူ သာသနာ: သင်္ဂ	feeding the four corners of the earth	

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sa-du'dek-tha-than-gi'ka'	စာသုဒ္ဓေကထာဓိက	type of monastic property belonging to the whole order	catudassa sanghika
Sa-gaung'pi-tauk-chaung Hs.	စာဂေါင်းပိတောက်ချောင့်	name of a monk	
Sa-gaung'	စာဂေါင်း	place name	
Sa-hso-daw-mya' at-hlok-pat-ti'	စာဆွေသောမြားအထွတ်	biography of poets	
Sa-ku'daik U' Hkei-mein-da' hs.	စာကုသိကဦးအေးမိင်သော	name of a monk	
sa-lwe	စာလွယ်	Brahmanical cors	
Sa-pyu'sa-nso-pok-ko-gyaw-mya' at-hlok-pat-ti'	စာပျူဆာနီဆုပုဂ္ဂိုလ်ကျော်များအထွတ်	title of a biography	
sa-ye'k	စာရိက္ခ	behaviour	cantam
Sa-yin' hnin' Sa-yin'sit-wun-dan' (pa-ha-ma'dan')	စာရင်းရှင်စာရင်းစာရင်းဝန်ထမ်း (ပထမစာရင်း)	first class accounts officer	
sa-yin'kaing a-ya-shu'	စာရင်းကိုင်အရာရှိ	accounts officer	
Sa-yin'sit-gyok-yon'	စာရင်းစာရင်းဝန်ထမ်း	Office of the Auditor General	
sa' thi	စားသန့်	to eat	
Sain-pyin Ywa	ခိုင်းပြင်ရွာ	name of a village	
San-da-lin-ka-ra', U'	စာသာလိင်ကာရာ	name of a monk	
San-da' Kon-ma-ra' zat	စာသာကောဓာရဇာတိ	name of a Buddha birth story	
San-di-ma, U'	စာသိမာ	name of a monk	
San-kyau'g' monastery	စာကျောင့်ကျောင်း	name of a monastery	
San' Nyun'	စာနွယ်	name of a man	
San Durl, (U')	စာဒုလ်	name of a man	
San Htun', (U')	စာစုတ်	name of a man	
San Kyu', (Hsa-ya Wun-gyi' U')	စာကျွတ် (ဆာယာဝှံဂျီအိ)	name of a man	
San Lwin, (U')	စာလွင်	name of a man	
Saw' Mel, (Daw)	စောမယ် (သော)	name of a woman	
Saw Shwei Thaik, (Tha-ma-da'haung')	စောစွေဇွန် (သမာဓာဏ်)	name of the first president of Burma	
Saw'xe' Kyaung' Hs.	စောဆေးကျောင့်	name of a monk	
Second Maun'daung Hs. Shin Nyer-ya'	ဒုတိယမောင်သောင့်	name of a monk	
Second San-kyau'g' Hs.	ဒုတိယစာကျောင့်	name of a monk	
sei-da-na	စေတနာ	vollition, intention	cetanā
sek-ta nu'pal-tha-na	စိတ္တအာရုံစာရ	contemplation on the state of mind	cittānupassanā
sek-yon	စက်ရုံ	factory	sakwa (wheel) • Burmese 'booth
Shan'ga-lei'kyun' Hs.	ရှမ်းကလေးကျွတ်	name of a monk	
Shen'ba-wa-mya'ga'yei-zet pa-la-thaw'pok-ko-mya'	ရှမ်းပာသာမယာဂါယေဇိတပါလာသောပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	those who have a relationship for previous lif. cycles.	
shin	ရှင်	lord, polite form of address placed at end of sentence when women speak	
shin-byu'	ရှင်ပြု	'make lord', novitiation	
shin-byu' bwe'	ရှင်ပြုပွဲ	novitiation ceremony	
shin-byu'na'tha' min-ga-la'	ရှင်ပြုနာမိဂါလာ	novitiation & earboring ceremony	

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Shin-kyin'wut hnin' a-chei pyu' bok-da'ba-tha	ရှင် ကျင့် ဝုတ် ဘုန်း အချေ ပျော် လှ ကံသာ	title of a book	
shin-laung*	ရှင် လောင်း :	novice-to-be	
shin-laung'hle'pwe*	ရှင် လောင်း : လှည့် ပွဲ	novitiation procession	
shin da-ga	ရှင် သင်္ဂါ	ordination sponsor (male)	
shin da-ga-ma'	ရှင် သင်္ဂါ မိ	ordination sponsor (female)	
Shin Gyi*, (U*)	ရှိုး ဂျိနိုး	name of a water spout	
shin'nein byan thi	ရှင် နိုင် ဖြူ သည်	leave the order as a novice	
Shin Ra'hta'tha-rok-pat-ti'	ရှင် ဇာတိ သာသနာ့	biography of a monk	
shin tha-ma-nei	ရှင် သာသနာ	novice	
shin tha-ma-nei hpyit bo' taung'ban thi	ရှင် သာသနာ ကြွယ်ဝ နှိုး စောင်း : ပန် သည်	request to become novice	
shut pa' thi-la'	ရှစ်ပါး သုံး	the eight moral precepts	
sho' ya-du'	ရှိုး ဇာ	verse composed for novitiation	
shwe' ya-du'	ရွှေ ဇာ	verse composed for novitiation	
Shwei-bo Hka-yaling	ရွှေ ဘို ခရိုင်	Shwei-bo District	
Shwei-bo, King	ရွှေ ဘို နင်း :	name of a king	
Shwei-bo U* Mu'nein-da'	ရွှေ ဘို ဦး မူ နိုင် သာ	name of a man	
Shwei-gu Hs.	ရွှေ ဂွေ ကော	name of a monk	
Shwei-gyin gaing*	ရွှေ ကျိုင်း ချိုက် :	name of a monastic sect	
Shwei-gyin Ni'ke	ရွှေ ကျိုင်း နိကာယ	name of a monastic sect	
Shwei-kyet-yek Hpon'daw-gyi' U' Mei-da	ရွှေ ကျွတ် ယက် ဘုန်း ကောဇာ ဦး မေဝါ	name of a monk	
Shwei-myo'daw	ရွှေ မြို့ ကော	'Golden City', the capital	
Shwei-na'daw-thwin* Ei'gyin'	ရွှေ နား ကော သွင်း ဧ ချင်း :	title of a eulogy	
Shwei-taung-kye' Rd	ရွှေ တောင် ကျွန်း : နင်း :	name of a road	
Shwei-the-yaung* Hill	ရွှေ သာယာဝတီ : ကောဇာ	name of a hill	
Shwei-thein-daw Monastery	ရွှေ သီရိ ကော ကောဇာ :	name of a monastery	
Shwei-u'daung* i ta-thet-la hmat-dan*	ရွှေ ခေါင်း : စင်္ကြံ သာသနာ့ ဘုံ စင်္ကြံ :	title of an autobiography	
Shwei-yaung-pya'daung-taw'ya'hpo n'gyi'	ရွှေ နောင် ပြ ကောဇာ ကောဇာ ဘုန်း ဇိုး :	name of a monastery	
Shwei-yei'zaung Hs. U* Kyi	ရွှေ ယေး ကော သာသနာ့ ဦး ကျိ	name of a monk	
Shwei-yei'zaung Main'hkaing Hs.	ရွှေ ယေး ကော ဘိုင်း : ဦး သာသနာ	name of a monk	
Shwei-zei-di Hs.	ရွှေ ခေဝီ သာသနာ	name of a monk	
Shwei-zi'gon	ရွှေ စိန်း : ဦး ဂွေ :	name of a pagoda	
shwei kyo'ta' thi	ရွှေ ကျိုး : တား သည်	barring the way by means of a rope, well gate	
Shwei Lok, U*	ရှိုး ဂွေ လု	name of a man	
Shwei Man* Tin Maung	ရွှေ မန်း : တင် ကော	name of a entertainer	
Shwei Thauing, U*	ရှိုး ဂွေ သောင်း	name of a man	
Shwei Zan Aung, (U*)	ရှိုး ဂွေ ဇာ ကောဇာ	name of a man	
Shwei Zai-di Hsa-ya-daw	ရွှေ ခေဝီ သာသနာ	name of a monk	
Sin-bun'gon* Village Hs. U' A-sa-ra'	စင်္ကြံ ဘုန်း : သာသနာ သာသနာ	name of a monk	
Sik-a-dwin* Hka-yi'the	စစ် ကောဇာ : ခရိုင် : သည်	title of a historical biography	
son'ma'	စုန်း : မ	witch	
su-la' gan-da-ri weik-za	စုန် ဂန္ဓာ ဦး မန္တ	sage with supernatural knowledge (excl. VM)	culla gandhāri
Su-la'ni Bya'ma'dat Min'gyi'	စုန် ဦး ဗြဟ္မာ သတ် မင်း ဇိုး :	name of a king	Culani Brahmadatta

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Sun'lon Hsa-ya-daw	စွန်လွန် ဟောသော	name of a monk	
Sun'lon ya-pyei'mein'gun' da-ma'aw'wa-da'mya'	စွန်လွန် ဟောပြော ပြောဆိုသော သာသနာ	title of a book	
ta-ba'thi	တပထိ	2 robes	
Ta-bin-shwei-hu'	တပင်စွယ်စိမ်း	name of a king	
Ta-hpet-hpyu	တပတ်ဖြူ/တပတ်ဖြူ	a white cloth worn during duty days	
Ta-hta-ga-ta'u'da-na di-pa-ni (1781)	တတိယ ဂေါတမ ဗုဒ္ဓ (၁၇၈၁)	title of a biography (<i>Amalaka</i>)	
Ta-wa-dein-tha	တဝေဒိန္တာ	heaven no. 25 (<i>Amala</i>)	Tavatimsa
ta-ya'	တရား	dhamma, law	dhamma
ta-ya' a' hlok thi	တရား အား ထုတ်သည့်	'to apply oneself to the dhamma', to meditate	
ta-ya' hnik-lon' thwn' htaing the	တရား နှစ်လုံးတွင် ထိုင်သည့်	'to sit and internalise the dhamma', to meditate	
ta-ya' htaing thi	တရား ထိုင်သည့်	to sit (in meditation) on the dhamma	
ta-ya' shu' hmat htaing thi	တရား ရှုမှတ်ထိုင်သည့်	sit and observe the dhamma (in meditation)	
ta-ya' win	တရား ဝင်	legal	
ta-ya' win za-ni'	တရား ဝင် ခန်း	legal wife	
tat-ti' ya'	တတိယ	third	tabya
Ta, (U)	တီးဝမ်း ဟောပြောသော	name of a man	
Tak-kyat Hpon'daw-gyi' U' Nyu-ni'	တက်ကျပ် ဟောပြောသော ဦး နှစ်	name of a monk	
tak-thu-gyi'	တက်ထူးဂျီ	headman of a circle of villagers	
taung-dan'tha'	တောင်တန်း သား	mountain people	
Taung-pu'lu' Hs.	တောင်ပုလူ ဟောသော	name of a monk	
Taung-pu'lu' i A-mei-yi'kan bok-da'tha-tha-na maw-gun'daing	တောင်ပုလူ အမေရိကန် ဗုဒ္ဓ သာသနာ	a record of the trip by a monk to America	
Taung-tha-man Daik	တောင်သာမန်တိုက်	name of a complex of monasteries	
taung-thu	တောင်သူ	farmer, hill farmer	
Taung-waing'ga-lei' Hs.	တောင်ခေါင်း မင်း ဟောသော	name of a monk	
Taung-waing'ga-lei'	တောင်ခေါင်း မင်း	name of a monastery	
Taung-waing'gyi'	တောင်ခေါင်း (ရွာ)	name of a town	
Taung-yo' Aung-myei-bon-san Chaung Hsa-ya-daw	တောင်ဦး အောင်မြေဝန်တော် ဟောသော	name of a monk	
taw-hlan-yei' ta-ya'	တော်လှန်ရေး တရား	revolutionary dhamma	
Taw' gaing'	တော်ဂွံ	name of a monastic sect	
taw' htwet thi	တော်ထွတ်သည့်	'to renounce into the forest', to meditate	
taw'la'	တော်လှား	forest	
law'lei'ze	တော်လှိုင်	'the forty forests' (objects of meditation)	
law'ya' kyaung'	တော်လှိုင်ကျောင်း	forest monastery	
taw ba bi	တော်ပါဠိ	enough	
Taw Sein Hko at-htok-pat-ti'	တော်စိန်နဲ့ ဟောပြောသော	biography of a man	
taw win yek kan'the	တော်ဝန်ကြီးတော်		
to'te	တော်	stay	
Tei-mi'ye' zat	တော်မူသော	name of a Buddha birth story	Tamya Jataka

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tha-man a-hpwe-win	သာမဏ ၃၇ ဖို. ဝဇ်	ordinary member	
tha-man sa-yoi	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	ordinary clerk	
Tha-mek-daw'da-ya' Chaug	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ် နေသော သမ္မုတိ	name of a nunnery	
tha-mok-ū	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	conventional	sammut
tha-mok-ū' beik-hku	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	conventional monk	sammuti bhikkhu
tha-mok-ū' than-ga	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	conventional monastic order	sammuti sangha
tha-mok-ū' thit-sa	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	conventional truth	sammuti sacca
tha-mok-ū' tha-tha-na being	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	name of a nunnery	
tha-na-hka'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	a beauty cream (<i>bark of g-tse</i>)	
tha-pa'da-na'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	collect alms in unbroken line	sapadāna-cārikanga
tha-ra-na'gon ne' thi-la' hse-ba' taung' thi	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ် နေသော သမ္မုတိ	requesting the 3 jewels and the 10 precepts	
tha-ra-na'gon thon' ba'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	the three jewels	
Tha-ra-wa-dī Min	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	name of a king	
Tha-ra-wa-dī Hs.	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	name of a monk	
Tha-ra'da'thi, (A-shin)	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	name of a monk	
Tha-rī-pok-ta-ra	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	disciple of the Buddha	Sāriputta
tha-tha-na	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	Buddha's teachings	sāsana
tha-tha-na-being	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	head of the monastic order	
tha-tha-na-daw	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	the Buddha's holy teachings	
Tha-tha-na-daw thek-ga-yī	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	Buddhist Era	
tha-tha-na-daw tho'win-yauk-pi'ya'han' tha-ma-ne pyu'thu-do' thi	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	'after entering the holy Buddhist realm, the monks...'	
tha-tha-na-daw zet	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	monastic lineage	
Tha-tha-na-pyu' hpon'gyi' kyaung' sa-thin-dak hnin' ka-ma-han' kyaung' daik-nya' si'myin'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	regulation in Buddhist monasteries of the scriptural learning and meditation type	
tha-tha-na-win	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	member of the Buddha's lineage, monk, <i>Ekkehard Schenke</i>	sāsana vamsa
tha-tha-na-win pok-ko gyaw	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	famous member of the Buddha's lineage	
Tha-tha-na' ba-hu'thu'da' pa-ka-tha-ni	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	title of a book	
tha-tha-na' baung	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	Buddhist society, i.e. monks	
tha-tha-na' baung tho' win thi	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	to enter Buddhist society, become a monk	
tha-tha-na' baung tho' yauk shi' bi	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	to have arrived at Buddhist society	
Tha-tha-na', Hs. U'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	name of a monk	
tha-tha-na' yeik-the	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	meditation centre (its monastery)	
Tha-tha-na'da'za'thi'pa'wa'ra' De-ma'sa-nya' Ma-ha-si Hsa-ya-daw A-shin Thaw-ba-na' Hsi-rok-pat-li' A-kyin'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	biography of the Ma-ha-si	
tha-tha-na a-dwan' tho'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	to enter Buddhism, become a monk	
tha-tha-na a-pa'	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	outside Buddhism, heathen	
tha-tha-na hnwe	သာမဏ ၁၈ ဝဇ်	associate of Buddhism	

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tha-tha-na hti' hkañ te	သာသနာ ထိ ခိုက် သည်	to hurt Buddhism	
tha-tha-na htuñ' ka' thi	သာသနာ ထွန်း ကား သည်	Buddhism flourishes	
tha-tha-na l a-pa'hna'...a-dwin'thok hsa'ket-iko-hlon thi	သာသနာ ၏ ဗဟု ... အတွင်း သို့ ဘက် ကပ် ခို ခဲ့ သည်	to come from outside and seek enter and seek protection in Buddhism	
Tha-tha-na lin-ka-ra' sa-dan'	သာသနာ လင်္ကာရာ စာတမ်း	title of a book	
tha-tha-na mwei	သာသနာ မွေ	inheritor of the Buddha's teachings	
tha-tha-na myei	သာသနာ မြေ	consecrated ground	
tha-tha-na nga' daung	သာသနာ ၅၀၀၀	5,000 years of Buddhism	
tha-tha-na pa' lu	သာသနာ ပလူ	heathen	
tha-tha-na pyan' pwa' nei thi	သာသနာ ပြန့် ပွား နေ သည်	propagate Buddhism	
tha-tha-na pyu' a-lok	သာသနာ ပြု အလှူ	missionary work	
tha-tha-na pyu' de	သာသနာ ပြု တယ်	missionise	
tha-tha-na saw ka' de	သာသနာ ဆော် ကား တယ်	insult Buddhism	
tha-tha-na tha-maing'	သာသနာ သမိုင်း	history of Buddhism	
tha-tha-na wun-dan'	သာသနာ ဝန်ထမ်း	responsibility for the Buddhist teachings	
Tha-tha-na wun-tha	သာသနာ ဝံ သ	title of a chronicle	
tha-tha-na yei' ne' wi'pat-tha-na	သာသနာ ရှေး နှို ဝိပဿနာ	Buddhism and insight meditation	
Tha-tha-na Yeik-tha	သာသနာ ဂျိတ် သာ	name of a meditation centre	
tha-tha-na zaung' nat min'gyi' nga' ba'	သာသနာ ခေတ္တ နတ် မင်း ငြိမ်း ချီး ခါး	the five protector spirits of Buddhism	
tha'go myat-zwa hpa-ya' tha-tha-na-daw dwin' tho' thut thwin' chi'hmyin' laik thi	သာသနာ (မြတ်စွာဘုရား သာသနာ ဆောင် ဆွမ်း သို့ ဆွမ်းဆွမ်း သို့ ပြု ခဲ့ ချီးမွမ်း သည်)	to promote one's son into the realm of the most excellent Buddha	
Tha-ha-nok-pet-ti'	သာသနာ ပုတ္တ	biography of a novice	
Thak-da-ma'nan-di, Shin	ဘုရားသမီးနာမ	named of a monk	
Than-daing, U'	ဦး သန်း ဦး	name of a man	
than-ga	သံဃာ	monastic order	sangha
than-ga-daw hnit myo'	သံဃာ နေထိုင် နည်း	two types of monastic order	
Than-ga-gaing'gyi' ko'gaing' a-kyauñg'	သံဃာ ဂေါ်ကား ငြိမ်း ချီး ချီး ကား အလောင်း	about the 9 monastic sects	
Than-ga-ya'na ün thi (also: thin-ga-ya'na)	သံဂါယနာ တင် သည်	to set up a synod	
Than-ga'wei-ya-wut-sa'	သံဃာ ခေယျာ ဝတ္ထု	dues to the monastic order	
than-ga ma-ha na-ya-ka' a-hpwe'	သံဃာ မဟာ နာယက အဖွဲ့	national monastic committee	
than-gl'ka'	သံဃိက	monastic property	sanghika
Than-gok-pat-ti'	သံဃာ ပုတ္တ	biography of the monastic order	
Than-hlyin-myō'	သံဃာ (မြို့)	name of a town	
than-mok-hid bu-ta' than-gl'ka'	သံဃာ မုတ္တိ ဘုရား သံဃိက	a type of monastic property	samukhaphuta
Than-tha-ra' Ya-thei'	သံဃာ ရာ ဘုရား	name of a hermit	
Than-wa-ra'	သံဃာ ဝါ	name of a monk	
Than' Htut, (U')	ဦး သန်း ထွတ်	name of a man	
Than' Sein, (Pa-li-man A-dwin'wun U')	ပါလိမန် အတွင်း ဝန် ဦး သန်း စန်	name of a man (Secretary of State)	
Than' Sein, (U')	ဦး သန်း စန်	name of a man	
Tha-da-ma'zaw'ta', (A-shin)	အာဒါ သံဃာ ဘုရား	name of a monk	
that thi	သတ် သည်	to kill	

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Thaw'ba-na'	၇. သော ကန	name of a monk	
thaw'da-ban	သော တာ ဟန်	streamwinner	sotāpanna
Thaw Zn, (U)	၇. သော ဇာ	name of a man	
The'in' Hs. Shin Thu-ni'ya'	သံ ဇာ. ဆရာတော် ဦး သီရိ နိမ္မိ	name of a monk	
The'in' Tha-tha-na-baing Hsa-ya-daw	သံ ဇာ. သာသနာ ပိုင် ဆရာတော်	name of a monk (head of the order)	
The'in'gu Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi' i an-di'ma'ek-gi'za-ba-na'	သံ ဇာ. ဂ ဆရာတော် ဦး ဂွေ. ဇာ. ကန္တိယ ကန္တိ ဓမ္မပု ဗုဒ္ဓကောဠိ	cremation of a monk	
pu-zaw-bwe'		worship festival	
Theik'cha'daung Hs.	သေဠာတောင် ဆရာတော် (သေဠာတောင်ဆရာတော်)	name of a monk	
theik-d'	သိက္ခ	supernatural power	
theik-hka	သိက္ခာ	moral discipline, w. of many seasons	sikkā
theik-hka hta'thi	သိက္ခာ ထပ် သည်	an ordination of a monk already ordained	
theik-hka tin de	သိက္ခာ တင် သည်	take up moral discipline, become a monk	
theik-pan	သိပ္ပ	science	sippam
Theik-pan Maung-wa'	သိပ္ပ မောင်ဝ	name of a man (author)	
thein	သီရိ	ordination hall	śīma
thein-daw'	သီရိဇာ	station	
Thein-gyi'zei'	သီရိဇာ. ဇေယျ	a market in Rangoon	
Thein', (Maw-bi Hsa-ya)	တော်မူ ဆရာသိန်း	name of a man (author)	
Thein' Han, (U)	ဦး သိန်း ဟန်	name of a man	
Thein' Hpei, (Tel Hpon'gyi')	သိန်း. ဖေ, တော်မူ. ဇီး	name of a man	
Thein' Hpei Myin'	သိန်း. ဖေ မြိုင်	name of a man	
Thein', Hsa-ya	ဆရာ သိန်း	name of a meditation teacher	
Thein' Maung, (Tha-din'sa Hsa-ya U)	သိန်း. မောင်, သတင်း. ဆရာ ဦး	name of a man (editor, of a sermon/sermon)	
Thet-gyi', (Hsa-ya)	ဆရာ သင်္ကြံ	name of a meditation teacher	
Tni-baw'	သီလိမင်း	name of a king	
Tni-ho hka't san-daw-win a-ni'ya-mya'	သီဟိုဠ် တော်မူ တော်မူ ကိုယ်စား	title of a book	
Thi-la-sa-ra' Hs., U'	သီလာသာရာ ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
thi-la'	သီလ	morality	sīla
Thi-la', (Hpon'daw-gyi' U)	ဦး. တော်မူ. ဦး. သီလ	name of a monk	
thi-la' hka'	သီလ တော်	period of morality	
Thi-la-wun-tha', (Shin) (also Taung-dwin' Hsa-ya-daw)	၇. သီလ ဝံသ (ဇာ. တောင် သွင် ဆရာတော်)	name of a monk	
thi-la-yin	သီလ ဂင် / သီလ ဂင်	nun	
Thi-ti'da-ma-thaw'ka' Min'gyi'	သီရိ ဓမ္မာသောတ နန်း. ဇီး	name of a king	
Thi-ti'tha't-da-ma-bi'tin-ka-ra' Hsa-ya-daw	သီရိ သဒ္ဓမ္မာ ဘိနကာ ဦး ဆရာတော်	name of a monk	
Thi-wa-i' Bo'daw	သီဝနီ ဦး တော်	name of a sage-spirit	
Thi-ton' Hsa-ya-daw U' San-di'ma	သီးပုံ. ဆရာတော် ဦး ဓန္တိယ	name of a monk	
Thin, Daw	ဓမ္မိ သင်	name of a woman	
thin-bon'gyi'	သင်္ဂပုန်း. ဇီး	spelling exercises	
thin-ga-ya'na (also: than-ga-ya'na)	သင်္ဂါယနာ	Buddhist synod	saṅghayāna
thok-tha-na	သုတေသန ဓူတင်	cemetery practice	śosānikanga
Thon-da-ra', U'	ဦး. သင်္ဂ	name of a monk	
Thon-gwa'myo'	သုံး. ဝိမ္မိ	name of a town	

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Threl-si-thu	သ ရေ ဝါ သ	a tile	
thu-daw gaung	သူ ခေတ် ခေတ်	saintly people	
Thu-gyi Kyaung	သူ (အိ) ခေတ်	name of a monastery	
Thu-nya	သူ ရှိ	The Sun, title of newspaper	
Thu-nya, U	ရှိ သူ ရှိ	name of a monk	
Thu-ya-tha-di Me-daw	သူ ရှိ သူ ဝါ သ ခေတ်	name of a female deity (Hindu)	
thu-ye	သူ ရှိ	ghost	
Thu-ye ^{II} (Shin)	ရှိ သူ ရှိ	name of a monk	
thu' ba-wa	သူ ဘဝ	his life	
Thu'da-me-daw	သူ ဝါ သ ခေတ်	name of a monastic council	
Thu'da-me-wa-di Bok-da-win wut-hu	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	title of a fictional biography	
Thu'da-me gaing	သူ ဝါ သ ခေတ်	name of a monastic sect	
Thu'da, (Maung)	သူ ဝါ သ ခေတ်	name of a man (author)	
thu'ta hkit	သူ ဝါ သ ခေတ်	divine sight period (mistaken reference)	
Thu'dei-tha-na' tha-yok-pya' a-bi'dan	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	title of a dictionary	
thu'tka-mein	သူ ဝါ သ	wise man	
Thu'tka, (Hsa-ya)	သူ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Thu'ma-na, Hs. U	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Thu'ma-na' thok-daw	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	title of a sutta	
Thu'mel-da Hs.	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a monk	
Thu'min-nga-la, A-shin	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a monk	
Thu'wun-na'shan zat	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a Buddha birth story	
Thu'ya-za mek-ga di-pa-ni kyan	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	title of a book <i>Samana sutta</i>	
Thu'za-da, (A-shin)	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a monk	
Thu'za-na, U	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a monk	
Thwin, (Maung/Sir U)	သူ ဝါ သ (သူ ဝါ သ / သူ ဝါ သ)	name of a man / Me-hsi-to-ke	
ti-ka	သူ ဝါ သ	sub-commentary	ti-ka
Ti'law'ka, (Thit-cha'daung U)	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a monk	
Ti'pi'ka-ka	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	the three baskets, Buddhist canon	tipitaka
Tik, U	သူ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Tin' Yi (U)	သူ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Tin, (Myan-aung U)	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Tin, (Pa-gan-wun-dauk U)	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Tin, (Shwei-pyi-daw U)	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
Tin, (U)	သူ ဝါ သ	name of a man	
tin ba	သူ ဝါ သ	'yes' in responding to monks	
U ^o (title, see name)	သူ ဝါ သ (သူ ဝါ သ / သူ ဝါ သ)	biography of a man	
U ^o Htun'Shein at-hlok-pat-ti	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	biography of a lay meditation teacher	
U ^o Myat Thain ^o Htun ^o at-hlok-pat-ti	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	biography of a monk	
pok-ga-la-da-ma-di-pa-ni	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	junior monk	
U ^o Pon-nya ^o at-hlok-pat-ti	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	become a junior monk	
u ^o ba-zin	သူ ဝါ သ	duty day	uposatha
u ^o ba-zin ^o tet thi	သူ ဝါ သ ဝါ သ	head teacher (mud)	
u ^o bok-nei	သူ ဝါ သ		
u ^o si ^o na-ya-ka	သူ ဝါ သ		

Burmese transcription	Burmese script	English	Pali
u'zin'	ဦးဇင်	(junior monk (abbr.))	
U'min-ga' zat	ဦးမင်္ဂလာ	a Buddha birth story	Mahāvamsa
U'pa-gok	ဦးပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	name of a Buddhist saint-spirit taking care of the weather	Upagutia
u'pa-tha-ka	ဦးပါသကာ	disciple (by)	upāsaka
u'pa' pa-ra-mi	ဦးပါရာမီ	minor perfection	upapārami
u'pek-hka	ဦးပေက္ခာ	equanimity	upekkhā
u'pyā-ze hsa-ya	ဦးပျာဇ်မာယာ	preceptor (of monk)	
u'pyit-ze hsa-ya-daw	ဦးပျီတမာယာ	preceptor (of monk)	upajjhāya
u'pyit-ze hsa-ya taung' thi	ဦးပျီတမာယာ တောင်တိ	to request a preceptor	
u ma-taung' hma' thi-la' saung' me	ဦးမာတောင်မာတိလောကံ	tight stomach first, then observe morality	
wa	ဝါ	rainy season	vassa
wa-ba'	ဝါပ	outside the rainy season	
wa-ban thi	ဝါပန်တိ	have dispensation from the duties of the rainy season	
wa-da'	ဝါဒ	teaching, views, way	vāda
wa-dwin'	ဝါသုဇ်	during the rainy season	
wa-u'	ဝါဦး	at the beginning of the rainy season	
wa-win	ဝါဝဇ်	inside the rainy season	
wa-zo	ဝါဆု	name of a Burmese lunar month (June-July)	
Wa-zo-la'pyei'nei'	ဝါဆုလပျှေ့နေ	full moon day of month of Wa-zo	
wa-zo thin-gan'	ဝါဆုသင်္ကန်း	rainy season robe	
Wa'thon-dyel	ဝါသုတေသန	Earth Goddess (sometimes thought of as male)	
wa hlat thi	ဝါလတ်တိ	intercalate a second month of Wa-zo (every three years)	
wa htwet thi	ဝါထွေတိ	terminate rainy season	
wa kat thi	ဝါကတိ	taking up residence for the rainy season	
wa kon thi	ဝါကုန်တိ	the rainy season terminates	
wa kyo' LN	ဝါကျိလ်	breaking the rainy season without good cause	
wa kyut thi	ဝါကျွတ်တိ	terminate the rainy season	
wa pauk thi	ဝါပေါက်တိ	breaking the rainy season	
wa pyat thi	ဝါပြတ်တိ	terminate the rainy season	
wa pyet thi	ဝါပြေတိ	breaking the rainy season w.o. good cause	
wa shaung thi	ဝါရှောင်တိ	keep abstinence during the rainy season	
wa theik-hka	ဝါသိက္ခာ	number of rainy seasons, degree of seniority of monks	
wa win thi	ဝါဝဇ်တိ	entering the rainy season	
wa zo l	ဝါဆုလ	to keep the rainy season	
Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw	ဝေပုမာယာ	name of a monk	
Wei-bu Hsa-ya-daw-hpa-ya'gyi'	ဝေပုမာယာမာယာဂျီ	biography of a monk	
Mel-rok-pat-ti' hnin' kyi'n'zin	မေလှဝေ		

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wei-da-na	ဝေဒနာ	feeling	vedanā
wei-da-na nu'pat-tha-na	ဝေဒနာနုပဿနာ	contemplation of feeling	vedanā nupassanā
Wei-lu'wun Hs.	ဝေလှိုင်ဘုရား	name of a monk	
Wei-pok-la' Mountain	ဝေပုလ္လံတောင်	name of a mountain	
Wei-pok-la'	ဝေပုလ္လံ	name of a monk	
Wei-than-da-ra zat	ဝေဏသနာ	a Buddha birth story	Vessantara Jātaka
wei-ya-wut-sa'	ဝေယျာဝုတ္တံ	duties	veyyāvaccam
wei-ya-wut-sa' ku'tho	ဝေယျာဝုတ္တံကုသိုလ်	merit from duties	veyyāvaccam kusala
weik-za	ဝိဇ္ဇာ	sage	vijā (anta)
Weik-za-da-ra' Ma-ha-hlei-ra'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဓါရမာဟာဇ္ဈိရာ	title of a biography	
Ba-dan-ta' Pan-di'ta' htei-rok-pat-ti'	ပဿနာပဋိပက္ခနိပါတ်		
Weik-za-dat-a-hu'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဓါရမာ	special supernatural knowledge/power	vijā dharma
weik-za-do	ဝိဇ္ဇာဓါရမာ	occult skills, magic	vijādhara
Weik-zaw'ba-tha', U'	ဝိဇ္ဇာဘုရား	name of a monk	
Wet-let-myo'	ဝေလှိုင်မြို့	name of a town	
wi-n'ya'	ဝိနယ	effort	virya
Wi-n'ya', U'	ဝိနယဘုရား	name of a monk	
Wi'du'ra' zat	ဝိသုဒ္ဓါနာ	name of a Buddha birth story	Vissuddha Jātaka
Wi'ma-la', (U')	ဝိမာလာ	name of a monk	
Wi'ma-la'da-ma', (A-shin)	ဝိမာလာဓာရမာ	name of a monk	
wi'mok-ti' hkit	ဝိမုတ္တိနိပါတ်	purity period	
wi'mok-ti' ya-tha	ဝိမုတ္တိဇာတိ	taste of purity	vimutti rasa
Wi'ni'	ဝိနိပါတ်	monastic code of conduct	vinaya
Wi'ni'pi'ta-ka'	ဝိနိပါတ်နိပါတ်	scripture on the monastic code of conduct	vinaya piṭaka
wi'pat-tha-na	ဝိပဿနာ	insight meditation	vipassanā
Wi'pat-tha-na a-chei-gan ta-ya'daw	ဝိပဿနာအစိရိက္ခာတရား	title of a book	
Wi'pat-tha-na a-lin'	ဝိပဿနာအလင်	title of a book	
Wi'pat-tha-na ba-wa-na hnit-saung-dwe'	ဝိပဿနာဘာသာနိဂ္ဂဟသွေး	title of a book	
wi'pat-tha-na du-ra'	ဝိပဿနာဓုရ	the duty of insight meditation	vipassanā dhura
wi'pat-tha-na du-ra' kyaung'	ဝိပဿနာဓုရကျောင်း	meditation monastery	
wi'pat-tha-na hkit	ဝိပဿနာနိပါတ်	insight meditation period	
wi'pat-tha-na htaing thi	ဝိပဿနာထိုင်သနာ	practice insight meditation	
Wi'pat-tha-na kyei'hmon	ဝိပဿနာကျေးဇုံ	mirror of insight meditation	
Wi'pat-tha-na mek-ga' di-pa-ni	ဝိပဿနာမေဂဒါပဏိ	title of a book	
Wi'pat-tha-na shu'ni' kyan'	ဝိပဿနာရွှေတိဂုံ	title of a book	
wi'pat-tha-na ta-ya'	ဝိပဿနာတရား	teachings of insight meditation	
wi'pat-tha-na tha-maing'	ဝိပဿနာသမ္ဘိဇ္ဇာ	history of insight meditation	
wi'pat-tha-na than-bauk	ဝိပဿနာသံဃာတော်	WM rhymes	
Wi'pat-tha-na Ti-ka-kyan'	ဝိပဿနာတိကာကျမ်း	title of a book	
Wi'set-la'tha-ra', (Ti'pi'ta-ka' Hsa-ya-daw U')	ဝိစေတနာတရားနိပါတ်	name of a monk	
Wi'tha-hka	ဝိသုဒ္ဓါ	huna hant (April-May) = (Vedā)	Variable
Wi'thi't-za'ka' Hsa-ya-daw	ဝိသုဒ္ဓါနိဂ္ဂဟသွေး	a monk who answers questions	

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Wi'thok-da', (Weik-za-lin-ka-ra' Hsa-ya-daw U')	ဝိသုဒ္ဓိသမ္ဘာတိသမ္ဘာတိ	name of a monk	
Wi'thok-da Bi'wun-tha'	ဝိသုဒ္ဓိသမ္ဘာတိ	name of a monk	
Wi'thok-di mek	ဝိသုဒ္ဓိသမ္ဘာတိ	Path of purity, <i>hiel of book</i>	Visuddhimagga
Wi'thu'da', U'	ဝိသုဒ္ဓိသမ္ဘာတိ	name of a monk	
win	ဝင်	member / <i>insider</i>	
win da	ဝင်တယ်	to enter	
Wun-na', U'	ဝုဏ္ဏ	name of a monk	
Wun-ni'ta', (A-shin)	အရှင် ဝုဏ္ဏိတ	name of a monk	
Wun-ni'ta', (Le-di U')	လယ်တီဝုဏ္ဏိတ	name of a monk	
wun-tha'	ဝံသ	lineage, dynasty	vamsa
wun-tha-nu'	ဝံသနု	'own race', village political associations	
Wun-tha' di-pa-ni	ဝံသဒိပနိ	title of a book	
Wun'tho-hpon-gyi' A-shin San-di'ma	ဝန်းသိုဟုံဂျီအရှင် သီလဝိမာ	name of a monk	
Wun'tho-saw-hpwa'gyi'	ဝန်းသိုစောဟုံဂျီ	name of a man	
wut-hu' tha-baw' pa thaw at-hlok-pat-ti'	ဝတ္ထုသမ္ဘာတိသမ္ဘာတိ	fictional biography	
Wut-hu'do' a-tai pyin-nya	ဝတ္ထုသမ္ဘာတိသမ္ဘာတိ	title of a book	
Wut-hu'han at-hlok-pat-ti'	ဝတ္ထုသမ္ဘာတိသမ္ဘာတိ	fictional biography	
wut kywei' hkan sa' thi	ဝုဒ္ဓိရိုက်ခံစားသည့်	undergoing the debt of <i>punera jana</i> (at <i>punera</i> rebirth)	
wut thi	ဝတ်သည့်	to wear	
wut yut a-hin'	ဝတ်ပတ်အသင်း	Religious Duty Recitation Society	
ya-du'	ဣတု	verses	
ya-han' da-ga	ဣဟန်ဒါမကာ / ဒါမကာ	sponsor of an ordination ceremony (male)	
ya-han' da-ga-ma'	ဣဟန်ဒါမကာမာ / ဒါမကာမာ	sponsor of an ordination ceremony (female)	
ya-han' hkan de	ဣဟန်ခံသည့်	to ordain as a monk	
ya-han'baung	ဣဟန်ဗောဓိ	the society of monks	
ya-han'da	ဣဟန်သာ	enlightened one	arahant
ya-han'daw-mya' bwe'daw-zin	ဣဟန်စောသောဝိညာဉ်စောစော	monk ordination names	
Ya-hu'la	ဣဟူလာ	son of the Buddha	Rahula
ya-thei'	ဣသေ	hermit	
ya-thei'ma'	ဣသေသာ	hermitess	
Ya-yi hta-na'	ယာယိဌာန	temporary (meditation) centre	
Ya-za-di'ta A-yei'daw-bon	ရာဇာသိတအယ်သောဝံ	title of a history of a campaign <i>of a king</i>	
Ya-za-gyo	ရာဇာဌာန	place name	
ya-za-win	ရာဇာဝင်	royal chronicle	rāja vamsa
Ya-za-win-gyaw	ရာဇာဝင်ကျော်	title of a chronicle	
Ya-za'gu'u'	ရာဇာဂူ	monk teacher of the king, head of the order	rāja guru
Ya-za'kon-ma	ရာဇာကုမာ	name of a king	
Ya-zein-da', U'	ရာဇိနိဒါ	name of a monk	
Ya-zu' Wei-da'	ယဇ္ဇဝေဒ	title of a Vedic scripture	Yajurveda (Skrt)
Ya'da-na-mun Magazine	ရာဇာနာမုနီမဂဇင်း	a magazine	
ya'zaw' ya-han	ရာဇာသမ္ဘာတိ	a meditation <i>method</i>	
Yan-gon-chaung Hs.	ရန်ကုန်ချောင့်အရှင်	name of a monk	

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Yan-gon-myo' Tha-tha-na' Yeik-tha Ma-ha-si pa-di'pat-ti' tha-tha-na ngwei-ya-du-tha-bin sa-zaung	ယန်ဂွန်မြို့သာသနာ့ ယိက္ခဝံသိ မဟာမာရ်ဗုဒ္ဓိပုဂ္ဂိုလ်သားကဲ့ရဲ့ကုသကန် တေဆေး	title of a book	
Yan-gon Hpa-ya'gyi'daik U'	ယန်ဂွန်၊ ဟူးယားဦးစိုးမိုးဦး	name of a monk	
Yan, (Maing'hkaing' Myo'sa' U')	ယင်းခိုင်းမြို့စားဦးသိ	name of a man	
Yan Aung, (U')	ယင်းနုဒောင်း	name of a man	
yauk	ယောက်	human	
yaw'ga'	ယောဂ	fetters tying to life, asceticism	yoga
yaw'gi	ယောဂီ	meditator	yogin
yaw'gi'ni	ယောဂီမိ	female yaw'gi	
yaw'gi a-haung'	ယောဂီအဟောင်း	old yaw'gi	
Yaw'gi a-lin'	ယောဂီအလင်း	title of a book	
Yaw'min'gyi' U' Hpo' Hlaing at-hlok-pat-ti'	ယောမင်းဦးစိုးစိုးညွန့်ညွန့် အတုလောက်	a biography	
Ye'baw-thon'gyeik at-hlok-pat-ti'	ယောဘဝသုတေသနအတုလောက်	a biography	
Yei-le Hs.	ယေလ်အလှတော်	name of a monk	
Yei-paw-gan Ywa	ယေပေါက်ကန်ရွာ	name of a village	
Yei-sa-gyo-gu-hpyu Hs.	ယေစင်္ကြံဂူ(ဖူး)အလှတော်	name of a monk	
Yei-sa-gyo'myo' U' Thaw'ma'	ယေစင်္ကြံမြို့ဦးသား	name of a monk	
Yei-u' Myo'	ယေပျံမြို့	name of a town	
Yei-wun Hs.	ယေဝွန်အလှတော်	name of a monk	
yeik-tha	ယိတ်သာ	shadow/meditation center	
yei da-ma' hai-tok-pa' ba-wa	ယေတမ္ဘာဟေတုပုဘဝါ	all effects arise from appropriate causes	
yo'yo' at-hlok-pat-ti'	ယိုးယိုးအတုလောက်	(normal) biography	
yo'yo' pa-ra-mi	ယိုးယိုးပါရမီ	(normal) perfections	
yok-hka'mu	ယုက္ခမူရုခင်	tree-rootman's practice	rukhamUlikanga
Yok-kan-da-ra', (In-ma'gyi' Thein-daung-law'ya')	ယုက္ခကန်၊ (အင်းမင်းသိန်းတင်တော်)	name of a monk	
yok-nan hnit-ba' go a-neik-sa' sa' thaw' lek-hka-na a'hpyin' a-htu' shu' hsin-gyin gyin'	ယုန်နာလ်နှစ်ပါးကိုအနိစ္စဝေသာ လက္ခဏာကားဖြင့်အထူးသိသင့်သင့်	contemplation on the nature of matter for symptoms of impermanence	
Yok. an Bok-da' tha-tha-na-win	ယုန် ယုန်သာသနာ့ဝင်	title of a book	
Yok-pon shin-kyin' wut	ယုန်ပွဲပွဲကျိန်ဝတ်	title of a book	
yon'wun-dauk	ယိုးဝန်တောက်	asst. office supervisor	
Yu-za-na	ယူဇာနာ	one league (a measure)	yojana
yu thi	ယူသိ	to take	
ywa-thu	ယွာသွ	witch/villager (female)	
Ywa-u' Kyaung' Hs. U' Mu'nein-da'	ယွာဦးကျောင်းအလှတော်ဦးမိုးစိုး	name of a monk	
za-ba-na'	ဇာပန	(cremation) funeral	
za-da	ဇာတ	astrological chart	
Za-ga-ra', U'	ဦးအာဂရ	name of a monk	
Za-lin-lan-di, (Mrs)	ဇာလင်းလန်မိ	name of a woman	
Za-na-ka Bi'wun-tha', (Taung-myo' Ma-ha-gan-da-yon Hsa-ya-daw A-shin)	တောင်မြို့မဟာဂန္ဓာဂူအလှတော် အာရှင်အနုကာသိဝံသ	name of a monk	
Za-nek-ka' zat	ဇာနည်ဇာတ	a Buddha birth story	
Za-nok-pat-ti'	ဇာနည်ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	a biography	
Za-ta-ka' wut-htu'	ဇာတကဝတ္ထု	Buddha birth story	
Za-wa-na', (A-shin)	အာရှင်အနု	name of a monk	
Zam-bok-pa-di'	ဇမ္ဗူပဒါနိ	name of a king	
Zam-bu-di-pa' Monastic Hostel	ဇမ္ဗူဒီပကျောင်းဆေး	a monastery	

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Zam-bu'meik-hswei Ma-ha-bok-da-win	ဇမ္ဗူပုဂ္ဂိုလ် မာဟာဗုဒ္ဓဝါဒ	title of a book	
zan	ဓန	trance	jhāna
zat	ဇာတိ	Buddha birth story/entertainment	jātaka
zat-gyi' hse-bwe'	ဇာတိဇာတိဇာတိ	the ten Buddha birth stories (Mya)	
zat thwin' thi	ဇာတိသွင်သွင်	initiation into caste	
zaw-ga-ni	ဇာတိဂါနီ	etymology of yaw'gi	
zaw-gi	ဇာတိဂီ	mythical supernatural being	
zaw-gyi	ဇာတိဂီ	mythical supernatural being	
Zaw'u'ka', U'	ဇာတိဝိဇ္ဇာ	name of a monk	
Zel-da-wun-hpon'gyi' U'	ဇေတဝုဏ်ပုဂ္ဂိုလ်	name of a monk	
Ok-kan-tha'	ဇေတဝုဏ်		
zel-di	ဇေတဝု	pagoda	ceṭiya
Zel-nat-ha'pa-ka-tha-ni	ဇေတဝုဏ်ပာဏိ	title of a book (Buddha's life story)	
Zel-ya-maung	ဇေယျာမောင်	name of an author	